



MISHKAN

■ A FORUM ON THE GOSPEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE ■ *Issue 65/ 2010*



*The Legitimacy
of Israel*

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A Forum on the Gospel and the Jewish People

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Editor: Jim R. Sibley

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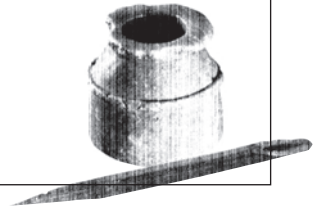
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Mishkan is the Hebrew word for *tabernacle* or *dwelling place* (John 1:14).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

The Legitimacy of Israel

By **Jim R. Sibley**



The State of Israel is under attack. Not merely the government of the State of Israel, or the morality and policies of the State of Israel, but the legitimacy of its very existence. For those with an interest in the gospel and the Jewish people, this ought to be a matter of grave concern.

Politically, the existence of Israel is legitimized by the United Nations' Partition Plan of 1947, Israel's Declaration of Independence of 1948, and the recognition of Israel by 154 of 191 UN member nations. Furthermore, it constitutes the only parliamentary democracy in the Middle East.

Militarily, the existence of Israel is legitimized by its victories in at least seven wars, beginning with its War of Independence. The wars it has waged either have been purely defensive or have been motivated by the security interests of the nation.

Morally, the existence of Israel is legitimized, not only by the long history of persecution of Jews in the Diaspora, but preeminently by the Holocaust. This is the reason some, like Iran's Ahmadinejad, who deny Israel's legitimacy are also compelled to deny the Holocaust.

Strictly speaking, the modern State of Israel cannot be legitimized biblically or theologically. It is, after all, a secular state. However, the Bible does speak of the continuing validity of the Jewish people as a nation-in-Diaspora and in covenant with God. So also it speaks of the land of Israel as given to the Jewish people in an unconditional covenant, even when historically they were not permitted to occupy this land. Likewise, Scripture speaks of the re-gathering of the Jewish people in unbelief to the land of Israel prior to their spiritual re-birth (e.g., cf., Ezek 36:24-31).

In this issue of *Mishkan*, the highly esteemed French scholar Henri Blocher leads with a consideration of post-Holocaust theology. This is followed by

an article about the issue of Israel's claim to the Land. This takes the form of a book review, by Barry Horner, of Gary Burge's book *Jesus and the Land*. Horner is the author of *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*. Continuing our theme, Michael Vlach (the author of *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation*) provides us with "An Analysis of Neo-Replacement Theology." Finally, Nicholas Railton provides a very interesting window into the life of Rev. James Craig, an Irish Presbyterian missionary to German Jews in the nineteenth century. Our prayer is that the articles in this issue would serve to stimulate further thought on these important topics.

THE LEGITIMACY OF ISRAEL



Post-Holocaust / Shoah Theology

by **Henri Blocher**

Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm (Job 38:1).¹

Theology should be nothing else than *fides quaerens intellectum*. Post-Holocaust theology should be the attempt, from the standpoint of Christian faith, to *think* about the massive extermination of Jews perpetrated by the Nazis in Europe, essentially in the years 1941–45, and its significance and consequences. Though the horror of the crime tends to stupefy our minds and suspicions of Christian responsibilities make us frightfully vulnerable to self-protective temptations, we may not evade the call to take “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5, NASB). We do heed Elie Wiesel’s warning: “There can be no theology after Auschwitz, and no theology whatsoever about Auschwitz. . . . One can never understand the event with God; one cannot understand the event without God. Theology? The logos of God? Who am I to explain God?”² We surely have no intention of “explaining God,” and our goal is not to “understand” the event; but, *with* our merciful God, under the teaching of His *Logos* and the guiding assistance of His Spirit, we do pray that we shall think in a more wholesome way of the event—rather than darkening His counsel “by words without knowledge.”

“Holocaust” is the common designation in English. Prestigious voices, such as Wiesel’s,³ again, have deplored this lexical choice, with the comment that a “holocaust” is a *sacrifice* offered to God—the opposite of the brutal murder of millions of helpless human beings. We may note, however, that “holocaust” may be used of sacrifices to *false* gods (2 Kgs

1 All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version.

2 Wiesel’s part in Ekkehard Schuster and Reinhold Boschert-Kimmig, *Hope against Hope: Johann Baptist Metz and Elie Wiesel Speak Out on the Holocaust*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 93.

3 Especially in his essay “Job ou Dieu dans la tempête” [Job or God in the Storm], according to Jean-Claude Favez, “Elie Wiesel et la Shoah,” in *Présence d’Elie Wiesel*, ed. David Banon (Geneva: Labor & Fides, 1990), 70. Wiesel contributed to the spread of the word but later regretted it.

16:13), and the idols of Nazi racism bear a family resemblance to Molech or Chemosh, who also demanded burning children as their daily fare. Two Hebrew words have been introduced as rival designations: חרבן (*churban*) and שואה (*shoah*). Most often one finds *shoah*, and I will use this familiar form.⁴ The former term, meaning “ruin, devastation,” occurred for the destruction of the first and second temples in Jewish literature and is not very frequent (it does not appear in the Tanakh, but the root is a common one in biblical Hebrew); the latter, meaning “storm, tempest” (Prov 1:27) and then “disaster, calamity” (Isa 47:11) was used by Polish Jews as soon as 1940 for what was beginning to befall them.⁵ It has become the preferred word on the European continent, definitely so among French-speaking Jews, and I will follow suit.

“Post” in our title carries a nuance. We will not concentrate on a theology of the Shoah.⁶ Rather, as we consider the event from a distance, we shall bring into focus interpretations that developed afterward, and we shall be interested in any fruit or effect we can perceive. In a first move, we shall try to locate the Shoah within a biblical framework, to identify some contours of the event, and to find the proper theological perspective. In a second part, we shall draw lessons, reflectively deepening and widening our understanding. Thirdly, we shall look beyond the Shoah, searching for import and longer term significance. Since the topic of anti-Semitism must be dealt with separately, in another paper, we shall refrain, as far as possible, from mixing the two and exploring the connections between (what many label) “traditional Christian anti-Semitism” and the last massive destruction of Jews in Europe. The ideological underpinnings of Hitler’s *Endlösung* of the *Judenfrage* were overtly anti-Christian, and, as regards the Shoah itself, Christians, whether nominal or authentic, can only be charged with insufficient reactions and culpable apathy, and not with initiative and active involvement.⁷

4 *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. “Holocaust.”

5 David P. Kingdon, “Holocaust,” *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, ed. Campbell Campbell-Jack and Gavin J. McGrath (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 322a. He refers to Uriel Tal for this information (and also states that “Holocaust” came into use in English between 1957 and 1959).

6 Hence a difference with our article “Approches théologiques de la Shoah,” *Théologie Evangélique* 6 (2007): 163–79, despite the overlap, which could not be avoided.

7 Hitler branded Christianity as “an invention of a sick mind,” as quoted by Richard Harries, *After the Evil: Christianity and Judaism in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 14. Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi ideologist, had composed a complete program for the eradication of the central Christian convictions in the German National “Church”—the swastika was to replace the cross with everything both symbols represent (William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960], 240). Not all Nazi leaders were as radical as Rosenberg, but it is clear that the *Führer*’s frequent references to the “Almighty” did not mean “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” If “of the four commanders of the ‘mobile killing units’ (*Einsatzgruppen*) which murdered about five million people, including one and a half million Jews, one . . . was a Protestant minister” (Byron L. Sherwin and Susan G. Ament, “Introduction,” in *Encountering the Holocaust: An Interdisciplinary Survey*, ed. Byron L. Sherwin and Susan G. Ament [Chicago: Impact Press, 1979], 2f), this is more an aberrant case, an appalling one indeed, than a representative specimen.

Seeing the Shoah Biblically

The facts have been established beyond any reasonable doubt. Whether the total number of Jewish victims was nearer to five or to six million may be left for historians to decide.⁸ Some have argued that c. 250,000 among them were *Christian Jews*.⁹ Non-Jews who were murdered in a similar fashion were about 6.5 million.¹⁰ Objections launched by revisionists and negationists only prove one thing: the power of presuppositions (prejudice) and ideological interference in scholarly, especially historical, work.¹¹ Technically competent academics may be blinded by subjective passion¹² and become manipulated manipulators in the warmth of a tightly knit “non-conformist” network. Against a reduction of factual reality to a social construct, one may note also that the evidence was sometimes able to break through prejudice: Claude Pressac had started as a revisionist and intended to expose the myth of the gas chambers, but he was constrained by what he found to revise his own opinion, and through his expertise the technique and operation of the gas chambers could be accurately defined and described.¹³ Material proofs, despite S.S. efforts to erase all traces, and an immense variety of testimonies from trustworthy sources, from all spiritual and political quarters, are more than enough for certainty. We may trust the official account of the Shoah.

Debated, however, is the *uniqueness* of the Shoah. In a sense, every event in history may be said to be unique. Biblical metaphysics—contrary to mere monism, which logically implies pantheism—maintains the truth of the Multiple, which is of each singularity. Biblical diction likes the phrase “never before had there been such a plague . . . nor will there ever be again” from the judgments of Egypt (I am quoting from Exodus 10:14) to the fall



8 With laudable scientific restraint, Raul Hilberg only claimed there were more than five million, cf. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Réflexions sur le génocide*, Bibliothèques 10/18 (Paris: la Découverte, 1995), 336.

9 This information was brought to the April 1989 Willowbank “Consultation on the Christian Gospel and the Jewish People,” either by Dr. Tormod Engelsen or in close connection with his paper.

10 Sherwin and Ament, 21.

11 I may mention a thought-provoking symposium on this epistemological issue (but not on the Shoah): Bruce Kuklick and D. G. Hart, eds., *Religious Advocacy and American History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). There are several remarkable essays, e.g. the balanced treatment by George M. Marsden, “Christian Advocacy and the Rules of the Academic Game,” 3–27.

12 Carol Iancu (*Les Mythes fondateurs de l'antisémitisme. De l'antiquité à nos jours*, Bibliothèque historique Privat [Toulouse: Privat, 2003], 144) recalls the first negationist assertions made by Maurice Bardèche in 1948 (*Nuremberg ou la Terre promise*) and Paul Rassinier in 1950 (*Le Mensonge d'Ulysse*). Bardèche was the brother-in-law of Robert Brasillach, who was executed after the war (a distinguished intellectual and highly gifted writer, he had penned outrageous attacks against the Jews and called for their extermination); one can imagine how the subjective factor influenced Bardèche's perception of the evidence. Rassinier, an anarchist, was a survivor of the Dora concentration camp; he remembered the *kapos*, some of them Jews I suppose, as more cruel than the Nazis, and this obsessive memory may have distorted his judgment.

13 According to Vidal-Naquet, 339f (who also comments that Pressac, for such a happy turn, did not acquire the true historian's competence). Jean-Claude Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers*, trans. Peter Moss (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1989).

of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Mark 13:19, as commonly interpreted). At the same time, the unity of God's government, and of the universe's being in its origin and preservation, entails that analogies, "family resemblances," warrant the recognition of classes, categories: it rules out philosophical nominalism. One rightfully compares. Is the Shoah beyond all comparison? The unspeakable horror of the Shoah should not disqualify the unspeakable horror of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem—remember Lamentations. The disaster of the Jewish War, with its extension into the second century and Hadrian's crushing of the Bar Kokhba revolt (135) affected the Jewish population in Palestine no less dramatically than what happened in Europe eighteen centuries later.¹⁴ David Wolf Silverman reminds us that "the Jews of the fifteenth century experienced the Spanish Expulsion (1492) as unique and in the words of one of their leaders and thinkers—Don Isaac Abravanel—as equivalent to the departure of the first human pair from the Garden of Eden."¹⁵ For the victims of pogroms in the preceding centuries, and indeed since antiquity,¹⁶ for a family submerged by hatred and seeing their children ripped or smashed to death, could there be a more unspeakable horror? Subjectively, isn't this already Auschwitz? "Pogrom," we are told, comes from Russian *po*, "entirely," and *gromit*, "destroy."¹⁷ After the assassination of the liberal tsar Alexander II (1881), there was a tidal wave of pogroms in Southern Russia that received the Hebrew name *sufot hanegev*,¹⁸ "storms of the south" (סופות הנגב); it is remarkable that סופה (*sufah*) is a near-synonym of שואה (*shoah*), as evidenced in Proverbs 1:27. This does suggest that the Shoah cannot be isolated from the long series of persecutions and massacres that preceded it. "The late eminent historian Hermann G. Adler opposed the view that Nazism introduced an entirely new dimension into human destructiveness. In Adler's epigram, from the day of Original Sin the Holocaust became possible."¹⁹

Some writers go one step further than the stress on uniqueness. Wiesel can affirm: "Auschwitz can only be the absolute revelation of something absolute, absolute evil."²⁰ The Eckardts also use the phrase "absolute evil."²¹ Franklin H. Littell urges that the Holocaust and the creation of the

14 So argues John J. Johnson, "Should the Holocaust Force Us to Rethink Our View of God and Evil?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 52/1 (2001): 124.

15 David Wolf Silverman, "The Holocaust and the Reality of Evil," in *Evangelicals and Jews in an Age of Pluralism*, ed. Marc H. Tanenbaum, Marvin R. Wilson, and A. James Rudin (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 272.

16 Especially in Egypt, where Jews were many. Fadyev Lovsky (*Antisémitisme et mystère d'Israël* [Paris: Albin Michel, 1955], 48) recalls the Elephantine riots of 411–410 B.C., and (60) the bloody conflict under Claudius, in Alexandria (Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews* 2.18.7–8).

17 Iancu, 81.

18 Ibid. I reproduce Iancu's transcription. To my comment on the two Hebrew words, I may add that Horace Meyer Kallen (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Pogrom,") asserts that pogrom, in Russian, was "[o]riginally the word for 'storm.'" I am not able to substantiate the claim.

19 A. Roy Eckardt with Alice L. Eckardt, *Long Night's Journey into Day: Life and Faith after the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 44.

20 Schuster and Boschert-Kimmig, 72.

21 Eckardt, 42. Cf. 53: "The 'devil' and 'antisemitism' are correlative symbols."



State of Israel are events as important to our faith as the Exodus and the fall of Rome.²² One sympathizes fully with the intention of such a language to express maximum indignation and abhorrence. It answers to a truthful experience: when we look into the Shoah we see opening unfathomable abysses of wickedness. Such evil is a bottomless pit. Yet, if we were perfectly lucid and properly sensitive, we would uncover a similar abyss in every form of evil, in “ordinary” fits of anger and common insults (Matt 5:22). How can there be something so ugly, so vicious and mean in me? How can I take some pleasure in such villainy? Bottomless. But this, to say it bluntly, does not warrant “absolute” language. A loose and emotional use of that register of words does not foster rigorous thinking. An absolute is a second god, and we should realize that there can be no relation, no contact, between different absolutes (this is even unthinkable)! A central insight of the biblical doctrine of evil, with confirmation in the phenomenology of human experience, is the *secondary* character of evil, radically relative to the good: evil is deprivation, the lack of some goodness that was due²³; evil is the perversion or corruption of the good. Though few among the “wise,” or would-be wise, show this penetration, we should discern that only within the framework of the sovereign divine rule, the rule of Goodness in Person, can evil be denounced, can evil be named. Without that framework, indignation disintegrates and dissolves into meaninglessness.²⁴ Many contemporaries, who have given in under relativistic propaganda and desperately lack bench marks to live by, do keep the Shoah as a substitute reference, an ersatz absolute—but this reflects the disorientation of our late modernity; Christian theology should know better.²⁵

Whether the Shoah is more important than the fall of Rome, time will tell (or the Last Day); comparing it with the Exodus is more risky, inasmuch as God has revealed the significance of the work He accomplished “with outstretched arm” through His servant Moses—the equivalent is not available in the case of the Shoah. The Exodus is a key element in the structure of *Heilsgeschichte*, whereas the role of the Shoah still calls for further elucidation. I do not wish to deny *in advance* an important role—and it is likely to be tied to unique features of the Shoah. These may be recognized without

22 Franklin H. Littell, *The Crucifixion of the Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); “Christendom, Holocaust and Israel: The Importance for Christians of Recent Major Events in Jewish History,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 10 (1973): 483–97; as summarized by John Jefferson Davis, “The Holocaust and the Problem of Theodicy: An Evangelical Perspective,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29/1 (January 2005): 55.

23 The mere absence of something good, as is inherent in finitude, should not be termed “evil” (contrary to those “negative” views of evil which call such an absence “metaphysical evil”): for humans, not to possess a third eye is no evil, but having only one (since having two belongs to the integrity of human nature) is evil indeed.

24 I developed the argument in *Evil and the Cross: An Analytical Look at the Problem of Pain* (1994; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004). (I may add that I was not consulted on the sub-title wording; it does not translate my French one, “La pensée chrétienne aux prises avec le mal”; my book does not focus on *pain* but, as I consider more biblical, on *sin* as “capital evil.”)

25 Johann Baptist Metz (Schuster and Boschert-Kimmig, 16) warns against turning “Auschwitz into a sort of ‘negative religion’ or ‘negative myth’ for Christians.”

falling into “absolute” language and should now be described as we go on drawing contours of the event.

Three features mark the Shoah to an unprecedented degree, in the bloody trail of pogroms and genocides: magnitude, method, and de-humanizing. Though history has known other large-scale massacres, the number of victims, the proportion among European Jews especially, is exceptional. I have argued elsewhere that ultimately, and radically, “quantity” *is* a “quality,” but suffice it to say that threshold effects (for all living creatures) and the organic dimension of a community—which is more than the addition of all its members—entail that magnitude changes quality. Its magnitude confers an awful qualitative uniqueness to the Shoah. The “body” of world-wide Jewry (it is real though it is very difficult to define) was mutilated, and the memory will last. Then the Shoah was unique at the level of method: “Outrageous though it may appear,” Alistair McFadyen

Its magnitude confers an awful qualitative uniqueness to the Shoah.

writes, “the holocaust was a triumph of rationality in planning and action, which was threatened wherever irrationality—even of over-zealousness—intruded into and interrupted efficient organisation.”²⁶

The contrast with pogroms, the outbursts of mob violence, is striking. The machine was working, as it were, by itself, and the cogs in the machine felt little personal responsibility—we may remember that Himmler chose the gas chamber technique in order to *spare* the executioners’ feelings, for the sake of efficiency.²⁷ Murder was turned into an industry. The place of method may be more than an illustration of German genius: a sign of the times. A key component in the method was the de-humanization of the victims: *Untermenschen*. It was systematic, and the very presupposition of the system. Everything was done to downgrade the Jews (and the Gypsies, homosexuals, Communists, Jehovah Witnesses, etc.) to a sub-human level, including in their own eyes. I remember reading that in the Treblinka death camp one S.S. guard had called his dog “Man” and would set the dog on a poor Jew: “Man, kill that dog!” Foundations were laid with the racist ideology that reduces humanity to biology. The ruling metaphor was taken quite literally (hence the good conscience of torturers): Jews were nothing else than vermin to be destroyed, pests to be eliminated, deadly bacilli, cancerous cells. De-humanization almost always goes with murder, especially collective murder, but it reached perfection in the Shoah. The combination is perfectly adjusted to the main tenets of theological anthropology and ethics.

Reconnoitering the contours of the Shoah in a biblical perspective also requires that we ask about applicable schemes, schemes which Scripture uses when disaster is to be interpreted. The first one is that of *retributive*

²⁶ Alistair McFadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 83. Cf. the comments by the Eckardts, 44.

²⁷ McFadyen, 93.

justice. Time and time again in the Prophets, calamities and desolations are foretold as punishments of the people's sins. Few writers dare suggest that the Shoah was a divine punishment! There have been Jews, Haredim and other ultra-Orthodox rabbis such as Jacob Israel Kanievsky or Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstamm, who have made such suggestions.²⁸ The transgressions that attracted the Shoah have been assimilation (it had gone farthest in Germany), Jewish participation in the *haskalah* (Enlightenment), and Zionism. Benjamin Brown notes:

Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum of Satmar, for instance, could never accept the argument that the successes of the Zionist state reflect divine support for its existence. According to his interpretation of a famous passage at B. Ket. 111a, founding an independent Jewish state before the coming of the Messiah constitutes an open revolt against the sovereignty of God; it is a breach of the 'Three Oaths' the Lord imposed on the Israelites. Creation of the State thus invited a horrendous punishment, which he finds in the Holocaust.²⁹

Simone Weil, the Auschwitz survivor and highly respected political figure, remembers rabbis *in the concentration camp* following a similar line.³⁰ Among Christians, apparently, Daniel P. Fuller argued that the Deuteronomy 28 threats were then executed.³¹ Contemporary sensitivities are so strongly opposed to the idea of retribution in history that we should pay some honor to the boldness of such a stand; people today are so afraid of being associated with Job's friends that they become most like them in conformity to majority "correctness." Who are we to rule out, as many clerics do, that God exercises judgments on the earth? Even the objection of "innocent" children is not decisive: if we take into account original sin, if we remember that all are born in sin (Ps 51:6 [Heb 6]; 58:3 [Heb 4]) and *by nature* subject to divine wrath (Eph 2:3), "innocence" is relative. If we agree with J. J. Davis³² that children dying in infancy are presumptively elect, and, though sinners, included in the atonement, saved in Christ, the problem of children is no longer so acute. On the other hand, what counts as apostasy in the eyes of ultra-Orthodox Jews is not assessed in the same way by Christian theology. The sins of Deuteronomy 28 are not *obviously* those of modern Jews. There is little warrant in the New Testament (against traditional Christian anti-Semitism) for the idea that all Jews, throughout history, remain under a curse and must be repeatedly punished. As Jesus, in utter sadness, foresees the fate of Jerusalem as the counterpart of His

28 Benjamin Brown, "Orthodox Judaism," in *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2000), 319.

29 *Ibid.*, 333. Cf. Davis, 56f.

30 As quoted by Jean-Paul Rempp, *Israël, peuple, foi et terre. Esquisse d'une synthèse* (Carols: Excelsis, 2010), 32 n.19. Rempp also mentions an "Orthodox rabbi" recently (unnamed).

31 Daniel P. Fuller, "Why Was There an Auschwitz?" *Eternity* 15 (December 1964): 27–28, 32–38; according to Davis, 60f, to whom I owe the information.

32 Davis, 73.



passion—He is the “green” tree, spiritually alive (cf. Ezek 17:24), and the people of the city the “dry” one, spiritually dead—He has in view the A.D. 70 catastrophe, not the twentieth century Shoah. The cry of the crowd, according to Matthew 27:25, means that they assumed the responsibility of their action, but God’s truer judgment is not even expressed, and in any case, it does not fall beyond the third and fourth generation.³³ We should, therefore, renounce the retributive scheme to interpret the Shoah.

The other biblical situation, not seldom encountered (very frequent in individual cases), is that of suffering *unrelated* to particular faults. For the faithful, it is the reverse side of their being in the world—for “the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19, literally, “lies in the evil one”). Job offers the paradigm situation of the righteous one who suffers *because of* his righteousness, and that it may be further purified. In the New Testament, *martyrdom*, which is one facet of Jesus’ own death,³⁴ is the example of suffering for God’s sake and a source of blessing. Can the Shoah bear an interpretation along those lines? Richard L. Rubenstein protests: “The agony of European Jewry cannot be likened to the testing of Job.”³⁵ But he speaks in Karamazov-like anger and proclaims the “death of God.”³⁶ Davis, on the contrary, sees the parallel with Job as significant: the role of Satan in Job corresponds to the “demonic dimensions of Hitler’s genocidal project”; there is a “randomness” element in history (Eccl 9:11), things that happen unpredictably, independently of the order of justice—Job’s sufferings, the Shoah—and this element helps purify religion from self-interest.³⁷ Davis similarly applies the concept of martyrdom: “A Jew, even a non-religious Jew, who was murdered merely *for being a Jew*, the bearer of a name associated with the God of Abraham, could thus, in an extended sense, be viewed as a martyr.”³⁸ The problem for Christian theology concerns the value, *coram Deo*, of the Jews’ righteousness and testimony. Stern New Testament statements suggest a negative assessment (Phil 3:6–9 on righteousness; John 7:28; 8:19, 41ff, 55 on the knowledge, and therefore confession, of God). At the same time, matters are complex. Paul does credit non-Christian Jews with real zeal for God, *zêlon theou* (ζῆλον θεοῦ), but misguided by ignorance or false knowledge, *ou kat’epignôsin* (οὐ κατ’ἐπίγνωσιν). Paul can speak, in his defense before Agrippa, of the twelve tribes of his day as “hoping to see fulfilled” the promise, “as they

33 See Lovsky’s vigorous argument, 432–51 (with a strong emphasis on early Christian writers).

34 John 18:37 (*marturêsô*, μαρτυρήσω); 1 Tim 6:13; the first martyr identified in the early church, Stephen, *imitates* Jesus Christ in his last words (Acts 7:59–60).

35 Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966) 153; as quoted by Johnson, 125. Johnson himself rather sees a convergence (125f).

36 According to Neil Gillman (“Contemporary Jewish Theology,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, 454), Rubenstein writes: “The death of God is a cultural fact . . . the thread uniting God and man, heaven and earth has been broken. We stand in a cold, silent, unfeeling cosmos, unaided by any purposeful power beyond our own.”

37 Davis, 75f; see especially n. 98 (p. 76): “This hypothesis of random, gratuitous evil as a ‘filter’ on selfish religion has some similarity to the perspective of Moses ben Hayyim Alsheikh (c. 1508–1600), a Jewish commentator on Job. . . .”

38 *Ibid.*, 69.

earnestly serve God day and night" (Acts 26:7). Inasmuch as this positive element can be retained, we are not obligated simply to reject Davis' proposal. We may add that the sure privilege of the Jews "according to the flesh" is their natural, family relationship to Jesus (Rom 9:5, *to kata sarka*, το κατά σάρκα, "as to fleshly origin"), and the hatred against them which culminated in the Shoah is bound to this family election.³⁹ There is a common factor, therefore, in the world's rejection of Jesus and of the Jewish people—there is a kinship between the Shoah and the cross.

Digging Deeper Theologically

When what happened in the Shoah is seen in a biblical perspective, some features spur on the theological mind to further reflection. One can first look more closely at the monstrous revelation of *evil*. Working toward the *Endlösung* involved myriads of very diverse people, some of them primitive, thugs, and even morons, but many well-educated and rather refined, and most of them "average." As Hannah Arendt brought out in her report on Eichmann's trial, these men were so *ordinary*.⁴⁰ A deep comment was made on the Nazi doctors (who usually needed a fortnight, when arriving in concentration and death camps, to quiet their feelings) by a survivor: "But it is *demonic* that they were *not* demonic.' The lesson of Auschwitz is that 'ordinary people can commit demonic acts.'" ⁴¹ How illustrative of the continuity Jesus revealed between the secret inclinations of the heart and spectacular crimes, and of universal sinfulness! And the part *apathy* played must be mentioned. The Eckardt's note with Wiesel that "the victims suffered more 'from the indifference of the onlookers, than from the brutality of the executioner.'" ⁴² Though there were many exceptions, and also noteworthy differences among European nations,⁴³ the vast majority did not actively oppose Hit-

"It is *demonic* that they were *not* demonic.' The lesson of Auschwitz is that 'ordinary people can commit demonic acts.'" How illustrative of the continuity Jesus revealed between the secret inclinations of the heart and spectacular crimes, and of universal sinfulness!



39 According to F. Lovsky ("La Théologie et Elie Wiesel," in *Présence d'Elie Wiesel*, 82), theology should "meditate Wiesel's conviction: the goal of the Shoah was to kill the Messiah, in case he had been born, and at any rate to destroy his family if he had not."

40 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann à Jérusalem. Rapport sur la banalité du mal*, 2nd ed., Folio Histoire, trans. Anne Guérin (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), e.g. 460f. Cf. Vidal-Naquet, 266, and 287, the warning about criminal potentialities in democracy.

41 Darrell J. Fasching, *Narrative Theology after Auschwitz: From Alienation to Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 133; drawing on Robert J. Lifton's *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

42 Eckardt, 20.

43 Jean Améry, a survivor (*Par-delà le crime et le châtement. Essai pour surmonter l'insurmontable*, trans. [from the German original] Françoise Wuilmar [coll. Babel; Arles/Québec: Actes Sud/Leméac, 1995], 172), recounts how, when they were transferred from Auschwitz to Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen, peasant girls in Bohemia would run to them, despite S.S. guards, with bread and apples—but not in Germany.

ler's program. The impression prevails that the Nazi enterprise could have been checked if more people *among those who did not hate the Jews* had reacted in time. The efficacy of the Danish king's resistance and, less well known, that of the Sultan of Morocco (Mohammed V) who resisted orders from the French collaborationist Vichy government,⁴⁴ suggest the same. "In order for evil to triumph, it is enough that good people do . . . *nothing*." Why is it so, why was it so in the Shoah? One reason, of course, is simple: in many situations, resistance would have required *heroes*; who can boast he would be one (Cf. Luke 22:33)? Willingness to self-sacrifice transcends ordinary ethics. The power of propaganda and twisted information was on the Nazi side. The dependence of individuals (even individualistic individuals!) on collective norms and representations was evident, and it reveals a fateful trans-individual dimension of sinfulness. The *gradual* character of the murderous action was used with consummate skill (one remembers the parable of the frog in a pot of water on the stove—at first pleasantly warm . . .). The first measures did not appear much worse than what Jews had undergone for so many generations. The *Kristallnacht*, another pogrom . . . nobody imagined Auschwitz. The skill of the Nazis must be stressed: they showed, as Primo Levi said, "The Devil's knowledge of the human soul."⁴⁵ They used all the mechanisms of human psychology and physiology, and were even able, in many cases, to turn the Jew "into the accomplice of his executioners."⁴⁶

The perversion of skill and science draws attention to one aspect of the revelation of evil in the Shoah. *That* evil, supreme among evils, evidenced the corruption of *goodness*. Unthinkable as it may seem to us, loyalty to their group (among soldiers), devotion to their country, and the conviction that they were redressing injustice and curing the world of a deadly disease, did drive executioners. Worthy motives! And this belongs essentially to evil: a borrowed, or rather stolen, essence (from God's good creation), turned poisonous. There is no lie which is not parasitic on a prior truth. Idolatry corrupts the beauty of a creature and its capacity for revealing God. Even murder, I venture to suggest, expresses the corruption of one demand of love: that the object of my love should not exist apart from me (love and hate pass so easily into each other!). The mass-murders of the Shoah did reveal evil as the corruption of the good.

The perfection of the *method*, which we observed, calls for a specific comment. It was the perversion and corruption of one form of rationality: "scientific and technical-bureaucratic reason."⁴⁷ It reveals the "totalitarian

44 David Banon, "Isaac, la mort en face," in *Présence d'Elie Wiesel*, 51. He refused to impose the yellow star, and the Moroccan Jews were not molested. I do not ignore favorable circumstances in both these cases: in Denmark, Jews were very few, and the stakes were not high for the Nazis; Morocco was protected by geography.

45 Primo Levi, *Si c'est un homme* [*Se questo è un uomo*], pocket ed. (1987; repr., Paris: Julliard, 2003), 137; the French translation reads "une connaissance diabolique de l'âme humaine."

46 Eckardt, 19.

47 Fasching, 41.

tendencies of technical-instrumental reason."⁴⁸ Wiesel seeks no protective nuances: "I am convinced that what happened in Auschwitz is a result of rationalism."⁴⁹ The warning is dramatic against the divorcing of ends and means, so characteristic of our social life. Do we resist actively enough the "reification" so easily associated with the rule of instrumental reason? We should meditate upon the strange condemnation of the census taken by David (2 Sam 24). Why was it so grievous a sin? Critical scholars speak of the old "taboo" of counting heads, but we should not rule out the possibility that the Word of God is teaching us a precious spiritual and theological truth. Counting means reducing to the status of parts of a larger whole items that can be added to one another: it involves the temptation to ignore the irreducible mystery of the person, the transcendence that belongs to God's image. This is why God only, in His unique transcendence, can count heads—souls—and orders that a redemption price be paid when a census is taken in His name, for each one a *kofer nofsho*, כפר נפשו (Exod 30:12). In Nazi camps, the *Häftling* lost his/her name and was reduced to a number, inscribed on his/her body; this may signal a danger not absent from our rational societies.

We come again to the work of dehumanization. It is worth reflecting on the "mechanisms" that were made to function. Reduction to biology relied on a theory of racial characteristics: Racism provided the explicit rationale for the Shoah. It should instruct us. It shows the hold pseudo-science can keep through many years, in whole nations, at all levels of education; it shows the malignancy of improperly formed concepts (such as that of "race"); it shows the danger of metaphors, such as the metaphor of "blood" and "blood purity," in which people uncritically invest their sense of identity. How vital the discipline, the therapy, of a sober scriptural method! Another dimension of racism, more or less unconscious, would be worth investigating: the role of sexual determinations. F. Lovsky has observed "the erotic character of the German legislation" on race.⁵⁰ The form and force of repulsions betrayed the play of such factors. The central place of sexuality in a biblical anthropology would throw light on that component of Shoah criminal behavior, and vice versa. Still another "mechanism" that deserves exploration would be "scapegoating." Nazi propaganda prepared and legitimized the Shoah by making the Jews the scapegoats for all the ills of German society, Europe, and even the world. Though his doctrine, in important chapters, must be criticized, René Girard may be of help here: theology should exploit some of his insights. Attacking the Jews is doing precisely what the first century Pharisees were doing in Jesus' indictment.⁵¹ Hitler, quite faithful to Nietzsche's thought (much more than Nietz-

48 McFadyen, 88. He confesses his debt to Zygmunt Bauman (*Modernity and the Holocaust* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989]), which I have not seen.

49 Schuster and Boschert-Kimmig, 71. He is faithful to the Kabbalah and Hasidic mysticism of his training in Transylvania (70, the difference between him and Emmanuel Levinas, who came from more rationalistic Lithuania).

50 Lovsky, *Antisémitisme*, 365 (366, the usual alliance of eroticism and paganism).

51 René Girard, *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde*, researched with Jean-



schean scholars are willing to concede), perpetrated the genocide to eradicate that Judeo-Christian secularized legacy: the predominant concern for the victims.⁵² Unfortunately, Girard does not see that the effective antidote to viciously inventing scapegoats is the one holy, divine, self-sacrifice: the Lamb of God who bears and takes away (double meaning of *airōn*, ἀίρων, John 1:29) the sin of the world.

Looking beyond the Shoah

Post-Holocaust/Shoah theology is interested in what happened, or is still to happen, after the event. Likely, it will shed some light on the import and significance (Lovsky rightly distinguishes between explanation and signification⁵³).

The first fact, no one can deny, is simply *survival*. A remnant did return from the camps. Deliverance materialized. The words of Psalm 66 came true: "For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, *but you brought us to a place of abundance*" (vv. 10–12, emphasis added). Even Levi, who remained a stranger to faith, can tell how they, the few who had been left in Auschwitz (too weak to walk), felt when they discovered that the Germans were gone: "It is certain that the remembrance of biblical deliverances in the worst moments of distress went through every mind like a breath or a breeze."⁵⁴ Eliezer Berkovits, an Orthodox rabbi, insists that the same pattern of trial and *in extremis* salvation recurs in Scripture and history. He "cites the many acts of kindness, generosity and loyalty that occurred throughout the terror, the fact that the Final Solution ultimately failed. . . ." ⁵⁵ Hitler failed and fell into the pit he had made (Ps 7:15). It is one of the features of the Shoah, which the Eckardts mention,⁵⁶ that it was self-defeating: Hitler diverted military resources to satisfy his hatred of Jews that were missed in decisive battles! In this way, the victims contributed to the overthrow of the demonic tyranny. History bears out two main principles of God's dealings with Israel: permanence, in the form of a remnant, through dreadful ordeals (e.g., Amos 9:8–10) and punishment of evildoers, in God's own timing.

Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort (Paris: Grasset, 1978), 196f.

52 "The spiritual goal of Hitlerism, in my opinion, was to free Germany first, and then Europe, from the calling assigned by its religious tradition, the concern for victims" (René Girard, *Je vois Satan tomber comme l'éclair*, Livre de Poche [Paris: Grasset, 1999], 222). Girard then comments on quotations from Nietzsche and (227) complains that intellectuals deliberately ignore them (227). Hitler's enterprise failed, but it avenges itself by turning the concern for victims into a caricature of itself in today's world (228). This is remarkably lucid.

53 Lovsky, "La Théologie et Elie Wiesel," 83.

54 Levi, 246. The last words in French (I had no access to the Italian original) read "*comme un souffle dans tous les esprits*"; I conjoined the two possibilities for "*souffle*," breath and breeze.

55 Gillman, 453, referring to Eliezer Berkovits' *Faith after the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav, 1973).

56 Eckardt, 44.

The summary of Berkovits' argument I just quoted goes on: "... the fact that the Final Solution ultimately failed, and preeminently the establishment of the State of Israel as dramatic revelations of God's lasting power over history and love for Israel."⁵⁷ The next post-Shoah event is the creation of the modern State of Israel. It is interesting to know that, for about twenty or thirty years, the Shoah was under-emphasized among Jews: they would rather enthusiastically identify with Israel. Only when disappointment with the State grew, "Holocaust consciousness supplanted Israel consciousness, to some extent, as the focus of collective attention and the core of the Jewish 'civil religion.'"⁵⁸ Yet the close link with the Shoah cannot be doubted. Without the trauma of universal conscience, the powers would not have granted Israel its recognition. Without the Shoah, a limited number only would have made the "ascent," the *aliyah* (עלייה).⁵⁹ Louis Goldberg combines both fruits of Shoah suffering—the political restoration of Israel (at least in part) and the saving testimony of believers in the camps which led other Jews in the camps to eternal life—to interpret Hitler as a "vessel of wrath" which God did use:

Another piece of an answer is that God led some of His choice believers into the camps. Because of the testimony of these special servants of God, many a Jewish person came to faith, either in the camps, or after being delivered.

Another part of the bits and pieces of an answer is that we can say that Hitler functioned much in the same way as did the pharaoh of the exodus. The more pharaoh hardened his heart, the more he became the vessel of wrath by which many Jewish people afterward would be able to escape out of Egypt. In the same way, Hitler was also the vessel of wrath by which many of those who remained after the war would go to Israel.⁶⁰

Rubenstein in his own way affirms the linkage: the return of Jews to the land "has *religious* significance . . . but the idea that it is part of a divine plan for salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*) can only be affirmed if it is also claimed that the *Shoah* is equally a providential expression of the divine

57 Gillman, *loc. cit.* (453).

58 Yosef Gorny, "Judaism and Zionism," in *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, 489f (quoted 489). Jean-Paul Rempp (75 n. 21) mentions that Avraham Burg, a former chairman of the Knesset, regrets Israel's identity being almost exclusively defined through its relationship to the Shoah, and quotes Georges Bensoussan: "Shoah hypermnesia leads to Zionism amnesia" (76 n. 24).

59 Though we must remember, with Rempp (65 n. 2), that Zionism antedates the Shoah and other factors were at play when the State of Israel was founded and acknowledged internationally.

60 Louis Goldberg, *God, Torah, Messiah: The Messianic Jewish Theology of Dr. Louis Goldberg*, ed. Richard A. Robinson (San Francisco: Purple Pomegranate Productions, 2009), 232. I was led to these lines by Richard Harvey's quotation (*Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 2009], 93); Harvey quotes from the manuscript (80), and I found the passage in the book.



plan.”⁶¹ Richard S. Harvey writes, “A successful apologetic must seek to answer the theodic demands of Holocaust theology, whilst also seeking to articulate a continuing theological significance for the Jewish people which does not ignore the contemporary issue of the land of Israel. . . .”⁶² Discussing the various opinions of evangelical theologians on this land, on prophetic fulfillment, on Zionism, lies beyond the scope of the present paper. It is certain, however, that a post-Holocaust/Shoah theology must make room for this extraordinary sequel: the restoration of a Jewish State after eighteen to twenty-one centuries (depending on the starting point, between the Hasmoneans and Bar Kokhba).

To many evangelical theologians (and in my own way, I would concur), *aliyah* is a “sign of the times.” The question, therefore, is raised of a simi-

lar significance of the Shoah. Davis makes a strong point as he recalls the biblical theme of the intensification of evil before the end comes. The pattern is found in Ezekiel 38–39, Daniel 11–12, Matthew 24:2–27, 2 Thessalonians 2, and Revelation 7:14.⁶³ He quotes from the Mishnah *Sotah* 9:15 and the Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 98a (“When you see a generation overwhelmed by troubles as by a river, await him,” Isa 59:19f).⁶⁴ The image of the “birth-pangs” of the Messianic age, the

“A successful apologetic must seek to answer the theodic demands of Holocaust theology, whilst also seeking to articulate a continuing theological significance for the Jewish people which does not ignore the contemporary issue of the land of Israel.”

chavle hammashiach (חבלי המשיח), was well-established, and Jesus Himself owned it and set it forth to interpret His own suffering (John 16:21). Davis’ proposal is cautious enough to be accepted: the Holocaust/Shoah can be viewed as “an *anticipation* of the end and an example of the *intensification* of evil as history approaches its climax.”⁶⁵ If, as I do, one hopes for and expects a large-scale turning to Yeshua among Jews “according to the flesh,” both the trial and the re-gathering to the land may be seen as preparatory measures, before the final re-grafting. The conversion of most Christians, even “nominal” ones, from their older anti-Semitism, an observable effect of the Shoah, may remove a stumbling-block (who could have imagined popes visiting synagogues?). Let the Shoah mark the beginning of the birth-pangs, and life surge from the dead!

Even the brightest hopes attached to the significance of the Shoah do not explain why the sovereign God permitted such horrendous evil to take place.⁶⁶ I am less fearful than Davis of what he calls a “fideistic” stance—I would dispute the use of the term—though I applaud his critique of popu-

61 Richard L. Rubinstein, “Some Reflections on ‘The Odd Couple’: A Reply to Martin Marty,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 44/1 (Winter 2009): 136.

62 *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, s.v. “Judaism.”

63 Davis, 70.

64 *Ibid.*

65 *Ibid.*, 71.

66 This thesis, in general terms, I develop in *Evil and the Cross*.

lar “rational” theodicies.⁶⁷ When God, at last, answers Job “out of the storm” (*se’arah* סַעֲרָה, a near synonym of *shoah* שׁוֹאָה; Job 38:1), does He explain why evil and suffering occur? As John J. Johnson writes: “Does he explain why he, as an all-powerful God, allows such things? No. He does, however, impress upon Job the limits of Job’s *understanding* of such things. What Job does learn here is that the ways of God are beyond the understanding of men, and that sometimes men and women of faith can only accept, in ignorance and humble piety, the ways of God toward his creatures.”⁶⁸ A post-Holocaust/Shoah theology will be a theology of humble trust and confident hope!

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67 Davis (62f) rejects “bare fideism” and (65–68) evaluates free-will, greater good, and limited God doctrines. Davis focuses on theodicy, with apologetic concerns; this paper has been composed from another angle.

68 Johnson, 125f.



Jesus and the Land

– *The New Testament Challenge to “Holy Land” Theology*

reviewed by **Barry E. Horner**

Relevant to this title is Gary Burge’s previous publication, *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told about Israel and the Palestinians*, published in 2003 by The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, a publishing arm of The United Church of Christ. Here the author openly declared not only his support for the Arab and Palestinian Christian cause, along with predominant criticism of the modern state of Israel, but also, in conjunction with this, his loyalty to theological supersessionism. As a representative statement, Burge declared:

[The resolution of the modern Arab/Palestinian/Israeli problem concerning the land] is not just a matter of pointing to the promises of Abraham, identifying modern Israel as heirs to those promises, and then theologically justifying the Israeli claim to the land. On the contrary, Christian theology demands that the true recipients of these promises will be found in the Christian church. Perhaps the church alone receives these promises! . . . [T]he New Testament goes a long way toward spiritualizing the nature of these promises. (188–89)

In *Jesus and the Land* (hereafter *JATL*), closer focus is brought upon the New Testament by means of very appropriate topics that include “The Biblical Heritage,” “Jesus and the Land,” “The Fourth Gospel and the Land,” “The Book of Acts and the Land,” “Paul and the Promises to Abraham,” and “Land, Theology, and the Church.” Overall, there is certainly doctrinal continuity with *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* and particularly with regard to further support for replacement land theology, it is more exegetical in nature. In statements representative of Burge’s territorial nullification, he declares:

Neither is there any interest in the New Testament to look at the Hebrew Scriptures and Judaism and validate their territorial claims. . . . [T]he New Testament is asking a different set of questions, and once

they are heard, the older questions of territorial theologies become obsolete. . . . For a Christian to return to Jewish territoriality is to deny fundamentally what has transpired in the incarnation. (126–27, 129–30)

Yet is not territory fundamentally concerned with materiality, and is this not also the truth with regard to material incarnation? Why then is it necessary to demean territorial materiality, since “the Word became [substantive, tangible] flesh, and dwelt among us [in the land]” (John 1:14)?¹

The Authority of Scripture

Because Burge teaches at a highly esteemed college that has generally been classified as conservative and evangelical and, therefore, committed to the inerrancy of Scripture, his raising of the question of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians in *JATL*—especially in light of explicit, Pauline authorial claims in Ephesians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1—raises concern. Of course, this is on account of Burge not declaring his own position on this matter, which silence suggests some obscurity, to say the least (92–93). Also, he claims that there is a lack of scholarly opposition to what he and his theological kin declare (123). Here he focuses on criticism of Hal Lindsey (122) as well as John Hagee (123), without referencing more historic and judicious restorationists such as J. C. Ryle, Horatius Bonar, and C. H. Spurgeon. There were also many more holding to this opinion from the late seventeenth century onward. Hence, it is astonishing that in considering the authorship of Revelation, Burge mentions John the Baptist, beheaded about A.D. 30, as an option (102)! What kind of scholarship he has in mind here is not made clear.

The Disobedience of Israel

Of course, in *JATL* there is necessary engagement with the Old Testament, to begin with, and especially concerning the ethical obligations of Israel toward God as occupants of the land (4–5). Much is made of divine sanctions against disobedience (6–7), then ultimately expulsion from the land and exile in judgment, resulting in post-exilic restoration (8). However, there is avoidance of acknowledging any ultimate eschatological restoration for Israel. A glaring example here is the referencing of Deuteronomy 4:25–27 concerning Israel’s promised dispersal in judgment (4), with the omission of the promised subsequent restoration in verses 28–31 where we are told that “in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.” Again, reference is made to the disciplinary verses of Leviticus 18:24–30 and 20:22–26, yet there is no mention of the eschatological national hope of Deuteronomy 30:1–10.

¹ All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New American Standard Bible.



Israel, Contingency, and Conditionality

It is significant that, concerning this matter of Israel's obedience/disobedience in relation to the land, repeated emphasis is made in *JATL* upon "contingency" and conditionality (4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 38). Hence: "Possessing this land is contingent on Israel's ongoing faithfulness to God and obedience to his law" (4). However, Burge also appears to incorporate the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants together here, with the intent, it would seem, to associate contingency and conditionality with the land.² There is no serious consideration of the unilateral cutting of the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15:12–21, even though Burge does reference the territorial dimensions revealed in this passage (100). Indeed, he often makes reference to Israel's relationship with the covenant and yet, in context, it remains unclear which covenant he has in mind or whether he melds the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants together in a manner that Paul never does. For instance: "[Zionist] Christians fail to point out the indisputable biblical motif that land promise is strictly tied to covenant fidelity" (123). If the essence of Old Testament land covenantalism was wholly unilateral, as Genesis 15 would indicate, then the point here would be true, that is with the faithfulness of God in mind. However, in context, it would appear that Burge has *human* covenant fidelity in mind. Yet the glorious reality is that in the sovereignty of grace in God's covenantal dealings with both Jew and Gentile, "where sin increased grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20). Nowhere in Burge's study does he show sympathy for this fundamental concept, especially concerning Israel and the land, namely, that ultimately "it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy" (Rom 9:16), as many of the prophets conclude in eschatological contexts (Isa 62, 65–66; Jer 31, 33; Ezek 36–37; Hos 14; Amos 9; Mic 7; Zech 8, 12–14). Burge's avoidance of this matter is all the more surprising when elsewhere he claims that he is Reformed in his theological convictions.³

Israel and the Fourth Gospel

As a specialist in Johannine studies, Burge's chapter in *JATL* on the Fourth Gospel is especially interesting, since he writes that "this is a Gospel written to illumine or reinterpret the person of Jesus" (43). Here much background information is helpful along with the acknowledgment of the intensity of the Gospel's Judaism (45). Great emphasis is placed upon what is designated as John's christological, replacement/fulfillment motif (46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 56, 57). For instance, concerning Jesus' revelation to Nathaniel in John 1:51, he rather fancifully alleges that "Jesus now replaces Jacob. . . . Jesus is now the recipient of the land" (49), even though the text declares that Je-

2 "Reformed theologians are not at all convinced that the promises to Abraham much less Moses are still theologically significant today" (Gary M. Burge, "Why I'm Not a Christian Zionist, Academically Speaking," *Challenging Christian Zionism*, <http://www.christianzionism.org/Article/Burge02.pdf> [accessed December 27, 2010]).

3 *Ibid.*

sus replaces the mediating ladder between earth and heaven (Gen 28:12), not Jacob. Yes, Jesus is the abundant, new wine that surpasses the poorer variety of perverse, carnal Judaism (46–47), though He does not minimize His Hebrew lineage, since His disciples continue to believe in Him as Israel's Messiah (John 2:11). Further, it is suggested that the land, like the Mosaic institution of the temple, has been replaced by the spatiality or territory of Jesus (49–52). Hence: "*Divine space is now no longer located in a place but in a person*" (52). Yes, Jesus is that person, who for a period remains contained within the place of Israel, and yet to this same place He will return (Acts 1:9–11). In all of this, the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are regarded alike and, thus, both are regarded as *passé*, done away with, even though Paul makes a clear distinction between them (Gal 3:17).

Further it is claimed that "John 15:1–6 is the Fourth Gospel's most profound relocation of Israel's 'holy space.' . . . [It] is in fact a careful critique of the territorial religion of Judaism" (53, 56), or in more plain terms, a nullification of the historic land of Israel, and this in spite of the fact that the land is nowhere mentioned in this passage. In the Old Testament, Israel is generally represented by a vineyard (Isa 5:1–7), including the land, in which there are vines, they being the people of Israel. Now in John 15:1, Jesus declares, "I am the true vine and My father is the vine dresser." Further, in this upper room discourse, "I am the vine, you [i.e., 'My disciples,' v. 8] are the branches" (15:5). In no place in this parable is the vineyard mentioned, and therefore, it is only right to assume that it continues to have validity; certainly this would be a Hebrew Christian assumption. Yet Burge concludes that in this culminating image "Jesus replaces what is at the heart of Jewish faith. The Fourth Gospel is transferring spatial earthbound gifts from God and connecting them to a living person, Jesus Christ" (55). But why is an "either/or" proposal—that of the true vine (Christ) or the vineyard (the land)—necessary here, when a "both/and" understanding—that is, Jesus as the true vine within the vineyard (the land)—makes better sense and allows for spiritual materiality?

Israel and Christology

This leads us to consider Burge's transcending hyper-Christology in *JATL*:

Christ entering the land changed it. . . . For a Christian to return to a Jewish territoriality is to deny what has transpired in the incarnation. . . . This explains why the New Testament applies to the person of Christ religious language formerly devoted to the Holy Land or the Temple. Here is the new spatiality, the new locale where God may be met. (127, 129–30)

Here, again, is not only covenantal confusion, but also the ignoring of the Jewishness of the incarnate Jesus, which, we suggest, will be maintained at His second coming. How would Burge expound the eschatological promise of Jesus to His disciples in Matthew 19:28, when "in the regeneration when



the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"? Here is patently obvious territoriality, unless contorted spiritual imposition is made upon the text. In conjunction with this christological supersessionism, Burge also presents a seemingly other-worldly, homogenous, amorphous final state for the child of God, so characteristic of Augustinian eschatology. Notwithstanding an awareness of this problem (45, 127), he appears to denigrate spiritual materiality, especially land, in an almost gnostic/docetic manner, which in fact the Apostle John finds necessary to repudiate, with regard to the vital nature of a glorious (yet earthly) incarnation (20:20, 27; 21:9–14; 1 John 1:1–3; 4:2–3; 2 John 1:7). Then there is a "Marcion-lite" framework, again Augustinian in style, that declares: "The New Testament church did not reach back into the Old Testament to find a theological place for Israel. It looked to Christ. . . . This means that the New Testament is free to deflect interest away from the land as *land*" (128–29). Read here that we are free to reinterpret the Old Testament by the New Testament, and inevitably in an arbitrary, subjective manner. How would Burge justify this? Probably by referencing the New Testament's free quotations of the Old Testament that unfortunately are so often focused through a Gentile hermeneutic, rather than the Hebrew hermeneutic which the New Testament authors surely employed.

Israel and the New Testament

So we summarize Burge's replacement land theology, according to *JATL*, as follows: The Christian church has become the new, universal, spiritual Israel in place of the Old Testament nation of Israel. Consequently, the Christian church inhabits the world as the new, universal, spiritual land in place of the Old Testament land of Israel. Proof of Israel's national displacement by the church is alleged to be Galatians 6:16, where Burge argues for "the Israel of God" meaning both Jews and Gentiles: "This is perhaps the apostle's most stark example of universalizing the new identity of the people of God" (83–84). While claiming support from Y. K. Fung and N. T. Wright, exegetically this understanding remains a minority opinion. The majority opinion is that the continuative "and" in this verse is much more likely than the ascensive "even."⁴

Proof of Israel's land displacement by the world is repeatedly alleged by supersessionists from Romans 4:13, where "the promise to Abraham or to his descendants [was] that he would be heir of the world" (59, 85, 86, 95). Well-known supersessionists such as Naim Ateek, O. Palmer Robertson, Stephen Sizer, John Stott, and N. T. Wright align with this misguided exegesis, though one wonders if they are driven to such an opinion on account of doctrinal prejudice against Israel and the land. There are no other references in the New Testament that might explicitly support replacement land

4 E.g., cf., G. C. Berkouwer, E. D. Burton, H. D. Betz, F. F. Bruce, W. Gutbrod, A. T. Hanson, S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., and Gottlob Schrenk.

theology. So, it is claimed that “world” here means that the “land of Israel” has been displaced, even though the text does not speak in the slightest of such territorial nullification; this is simply an unsupportable assumption. Burge writes:

Romans 4:13 is the only place where the apostle refers explicitly to the promises for the land given to Abraham and in this case Paul fails to refer to Judea. . . . In Genesis Abraham was to inherit the Holy Land. In Romans 4:13 his claim is on the world. . . . Paul universalizes the promises to Abraham in order to include all lands (85, 92).

There is strange reasoning here. Respectfully, we deny that in Romans 4:13 “the apostle refers explicitly to the promises for the land given to Abraham.” For Paul, the land is not in mind here, but rather the world of the nations. Note how in 1 Timothy 3:16 Paul synonymously uses the terms “the nations” and “the world.” In Genesis 35:11, when Jacob has the Abrahamic covenant confirmed to him, he is promised that “a nation and a company of nations will come from you.” There is not the slightest suggestion here that the “company of nations” will nullify and absorb “the nation.” The same is true in Romans 4:13, where surely Paul has “the nations” in mind. So we agree with C. K. Barrett. “‘Heir of the world’ is probably drawn from Gen. xxii 18 (‘all the nations’).”⁵

Israel and the Land in the New Testament

Moving on to Burge’s understanding of Paul’s alleged contemporary and eschatological disregard for the land (73–76), we briefly mention the apostle’s appreciation of his present status, that of being “of the tribe of Benjamin” (Rom 11:1), which expression has both demographic and geographic or regional meaning. His anticipation of the redemption of creation and the sons of God (Rom 8:18–23) may well have prompted his interest in the future of Israel so passionately expounded in Romans 9–11. So, to Israel there continued to belong irrevocably “the gifts [τὰ χαρίσματα, *ta charismata*] and the calling of God” (Rom 11:29). Surely, the “gifts” here included that of the land (cf. “the covenants” and “the promises,” Rom 9:4–5; also Gen 17:7–8). Also, consider that in Romans 11, Paul’s concern that the extensive span of Gentile fulfillment and the hardening of the Jewish people be understood⁶ surely overshadowed his immediate interest in the land. He was probably well aware of the coming humiliation of Israel.⁷ Further, he had a mission to fulfill abroad that included the Gentiles as well as the Diaspora (Acts 9:15), while at the same time upholding his Jewishness (Acts 21:39; 22:3).

5 C. K. Barrett, *Epistle to the Romans*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 94.

6 Romans 11:25.

7 Cf. Luke 21:24.



Israel and Romans 9–11

Hence, we now more closely consider Burge's understanding of Romans 9–11, the quintessential New Testament passage concerning the future of national Israel. In *JATL*, he suggests a paradox that is really of his own making. "[I]f the covenants of Judaism are still in force, are the privileges of those covenants still in play for Paul? Does this paradox extend to the land?" We would positively affirm such reasoning. But then follows: "Has Paul not already implied that God has revoked the territorial character of Judaism?" (88). To this, without hesitation, we respond negatively, especially in light of the fact that Romans was written by a Messianic rabbi, not a Gentile. In Jewish parlance, if the land was, in fact, excluded here from "the gifts" (11:29), it would have been necessary to explicitly state such a fact to any Jewish Christian mind. To write of *implicit* exclusion of the land is, in fact, to confess weakness in the argument. So God's assured interest in His people (11:1) is confirmed by a present remnant (11:5), and, this being true, Burge strangely asserts that it is comprised of not only Jewish, but also Gentile, believers (88). Justification for the inclusion of Gentiles here, being against the overwhelming thrust of commentators⁸ in light of verses 1–4, is alleged to be due to Paul's application of Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 back in Romans 9:25–26 with regard to the Gentiles.⁹ In Romans 9:23–26, Paul continues his interest in the Jew, as well as the Gentile, concerning the mercy of God, that he began in Romans 1:16. However, Romans 11:1–10 is wholly concerned with God's covenant love for His Hebrew people, particularly those who were "chosen [i.e., the remnant]" (v. 7), even before time (v. 2).

So the analogy of the cultivated olive tree in Romans 11 leads Burge to conclude that the Jewish people "have a place of honor even in their unbelief. . . . For the sake of their history, for the sake of the promises made to their ancestors, God will retain a place for Jews in history" (90). However, there is subtlety in language here, which provides no assurance that covenantal ethnicity, let alone nationality and territory, will remain as present and future realities. It is as if the records of history will give Israel a place of honorable mention, while at the same time, and emphatically, there has come about ethnic, national, and territorial nullification. The reason is that in the next breath Burge asks again, if the gifts and calling of God remain in force, does not the land retain validity in the Pauline eschatology (88, 90)? He responds: "Paul's bold treatment of the law, Jerusalem and even the Temple all point to an implicit rejection of Jewish territoriality" (90). Here, once again, is covenantal confusion that avoids the distinctive, inviolate character of the Abrahamic covenant. Further, Burge suggests, concerning Romans 11: "An ethnocentric territoriality anchored to ancestral theological claims cannot survive Paul's fresh rearrangement of God's

8 So C. K. Barrett, Douglas J. Moo, Leon Morris, John Murray, Thomas R. Schreiner, etc.

9 On the use of Hosea by Paul in Romans 9, David Stern comments: "Sha'ul uses these texts from Hoshea midrashically" (*Jewish New Testament Commentary* [Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Resources International, 1992], 392). The apostle is not introducing supersessionist exegesis.

saving purposes in Christ" (90–91). However, we strongly reject the terminology here of a supposed "fresh rearrangement" by Paul. Rather, he presents an explanation of that which was revealed from the beginning, namely, that "a nation and a company of nations shall come forth from you [Jacob]" (Gen 35:11). Romans 11:28 makes this abundantly clear.

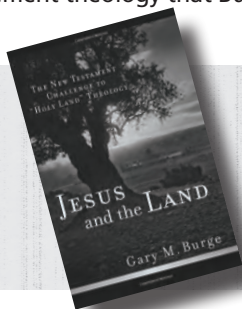
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Conclusion

By way of conclusion, Burge asserts, as referenced at the beginning of this review: "In sum, the New Testament is asking a different set of questions [than Christian Zionism], and once they are heard, the older questions of territorial theologies become obsolete" (127). Yet we would challenge the idea that the very New Testament/Covenant, which is appealed to here, is in agreement with the anti-Judaic claim being put forward by supersessionism.

According to Jeremiah 31:31–34, the new covenant was originally promised to "the house of Israel" and "the house of Judah." Confirmation of this new covenant in Jeremiah 33:1–26, rooted in "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (v. 26), also incorporates restoration of "the land" (v. 11). In the Gospel of Luke, we find the quintessential Jewish Messiah confirming this promise, which had been revealed to Jeremiah, in the presence of a wholly Jewish band of disciples (22:20). Then, Jesus yielded Himself to His divine vocation in becoming the slain Lamb of God, that is, in becoming the object of the cutting of the new covenant, before a predominantly Jewish crowd. Subsequently, it was most likely a Jewish author who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews to a Jewish audience, and so reiterated the original promise revealed to Jeremiah (Heb 8:7–13; 10:15–18). For Burge to write, as referenced earlier, that "[t]he New Testament church did not reach back into the Old Testament to find a theological place for the land" (128), is simply to emasculate the Jewishness of the Christian gospel and, as a result, present an inadequate Christology. This is a fundamental problem with replacement theology that Burge plainly represents in *JATL*.



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An Analysis of Neo-Replacement Theology

by **Michael J. Vlach**

I have spent the better part of the last ten years studying and examining the doctrine of replacement theology, which is the view that the New Testament church replaces or supersedes the nation Israel as the people of God. This topic was the subject of my Ph.D. dissertation along with two books I have written.¹ As I made known in these works, most literature that examines the view that the church is the new or true Israel has used one of two designations—replacement theology or supersessionism. Supersessionism appears to have the edge in scholarly literature, although “replacement theology” is used often as well. Along with others, I have been comfortable with both designations and have used them interchangeably.² In the past few years, though, there has been a backlash by some against the title “replacement theology.” Some who hold that the church is the new or true Israel and that national Israel will not experience a restoration have been adamant that they are not really replacement theologians and would rather identify their position as something else. For example, Hank Hanegraaff declared:

Finally, I have never argued for Replacement Theology. As demonstrated in *The Apocalypse Code*, far from having two people divided by race, God has only ever had one chosen people who form one covenant community, beautifully symbolized in Scripture by one cultivated olive tree. Indeed, the precise terminology used to describe the children of Israel in the Old Testament is ascribed to the church in the New Testament.³

- 1 Michael J. Vlach, “The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism” (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004); *The Church as a Replacement of Israel?: An Analysis of Supersessionism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009); *Has the Church Replaced Israel: A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010).
- 2 Ronald Diprose (*Israel in the Development of Christian Thought* [Rome: Istituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano, 2000], 31, n. 2) views the titles “replacement theology” and “supersessionism” as being synonymous.
- 3 Hank Hanegraaff, “Response to *National Liberty Journal* article on *The Apocalypse Code*,” <http://www.equipresources.org/atf/cf/%7B9C4EE03A-F988-4091-84BD-F8E70A3B0215%7D/PSN001.PDF> (accessed November 19, 2010).

According to Hanegraaff, the designation “replacement theology” has been invented by dispensationalists to mute serious discussion of the main issues: “Rather than reason together in collegial debate, dispensationalists have coined the phrase ‘Replacement theologian’ as the ultimate silencer.”⁴ So for Hanegraaff, not only does the title “replacement theology” not represent his beliefs, this designation was invented by dispensationalists to hinder “collegial debate.”

Steve Lehrer, one of the key leaders of New Covenant theology, also does not like the title “replacement theology” since he does not see the church replacing the nation Israel. He says, “Instead I would rather use the term ‘fulfillment theology.’ Israel was simply a picture of the true people of God, which the church fulfills.”⁵ R. Scott Clark, a covenant theologian, with his article “Covenant Theology Is Not Replacement Theology,” rejects the concept of replacement theology: “. . . despite the abrogation of the national covenant by the obedience, death, and resurrection of Christ (Col. 2:14), the NT church has not ‘replaced’ the Jews. Paul says that God ‘grafted’ the Gentiles into the people of God. Grafting is not replacement, it is addition.”⁶

Sam Waldron has also expressed disagreement with the designations “replacement theology” and “supersessionism.” In the chapter “Supersessionism and Replacement Theology” from his book *MacArthur’s Millennial Manifesto*, Waldron states, “Let me assert that this terminology is largely pejorative in nature.”⁷ Thus, Waldron goes beyond others who have expressed dissatisfaction with the title “replacement theology” by also expressing displeasure with the term “supersessionism.” He states: “To begin with, my research revealed that supersessionism, as it is commonly used, conveys the theologically extreme and hermeneutically insensitive view that the Church has simply and willy-nilly replaced Israel in God’s promises and purposes.”⁸ Waldron also goes on to say, “To be identified as a supersession-

4 Ibid. It should be noted that Hanegraaff’s critique of dispensationalism in his book *The Apocalypse Code* links dispensationalism with Darwinian evolution, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Joseph Smith, Bill Clinton, ethnic cleansing, and racism. He also brings up Hitler and considers dispensational views on the antichrist a potential threat to the deity of Christ. See Hank Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code: Find Out What the Bible Says about the End Times and Why It Matters Today* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007). Some may conclude that Hanegraaff himself has hindered “collegial discussion” with the use of such terminology and association. I point this out in my review of Hanegraaff’s book (“My Thoughts on Hank Hanegraaff’s Book, *The Apocalypse Code*,” *TheologicalStudies.org*, <http://www.theologicalstudies.org/page/page/5869905.htm> [accessed November 25, 2010]). Kim Riddlebarger, an amillennialist, in his critique of Hanegraaff’s book states, “The result is, in my opinion, Hanegraaff’s book has a ‘snotty,’ condescending and sensationalist tone to it” (Kim Riddlebarger, “Hanegraaff’s ‘The Apocalypse Code’” <http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/the-latest-post/2007/8/15/hanegraaffs-the-apocalypse-code.html> [accessed November 27, 2010]).

5 Steve Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered* (N.P.: Steve Lehrer, 2006), 203.

6 R. Scott Clark, “Covenant Theology Is Not Replacement Theology,” *The Heidelberg*, entry posted September 14, 2008, <http://heidelberg.wordpress.com/2008/09/14/covenant-theology-is-not-replacement-theology> (accessed November 19, 2010).

7 Samuel E. Waldron, *MacArthur’s Millennial Manifesto: A Friendly Response* (Owensboro, KY: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2008), 6.

8 Ibid.



ist, then, carries negative connotations similar to other labels such as ‘sabbatarian’ and ‘puritanical.’”⁹ Waldron then calls on amillennialists “to reject the terminology of supersessionism and replacement theology.”¹⁰

In the attempt to escape the “replacement” label, some have offered what they consider to be more appropriate terms. As mentioned, Lehrer prefers “fulfillment.” Matthew Winzer, of the Australian Free Church, said, “When speaking with dispensationalists I generally exchange the word ‘replacement’ with ‘transference.’”¹¹ I have also heard some argue for “expansion” and “enlargement.” Waldron prefers the term “continuation” to describe the church’s relationship to Israel.¹²

So what are we to make of all this? For the remainder of this article, I will make some observations concerning the controversy of replacement theology and whether replacement theology is an appropriate designation. Some of these observations are related to historical issues, since some today are claiming that there really has been no such thing as replacement theology and that dispensationalists are the ones pushing the title “replacement theology” in a pejorative manner. It should also be noted that the challenge to the titles “replacement theology” and “supersessionism” is very recent (perhaps 2005 and later), so there is not much specific discussion in print by those who do not like these titles. Nevertheless, here are some observations:

Observation 1: The view that the church replaces or supersedes the nation Israel as the people of God goes back to the middle of the second century A.D.

Around A.D. 150, Justin Martyr became the first person to explicitly identify the church as “Israel.”¹³ The latter half of the Patristic Era, in particular, found a growing acceptance of the replacement view. Factors such as the church’s perception of the two destructions of Jerusalem (A.D. 70 and 135), the growing Gentile composition of the church, and the trend toward allegorical interpretation in the church were also factors in the growth of replacement theology.¹⁴

There is little doubt that many theologians of the early church promoted replacement theology. Irenaeus (130–200) wrote, “For inasmuch as the former [the Jews] have rejected the Son of God, and cast Him out of the vineyard when they slew Him, God has justly rejected them, and given to the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Matthew Winzer, “Replacement Theology = Covenant Theology,” The Puritan Board, entry posted May 21, 2008, <http://www.puritanboard.com/f31/replacement-theology-covenant-theology-33086> (accessed November 19, 2010).

¹² Waldron, 7.

¹³ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 11 (ANF 1:200).

¹⁴ For a helpful discussion on how these factors contributed to the acceptance of replacement theology, see H. Wayne House, “The Church’s Appropriation of Israel’s Blessings,” in *Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God’s Promises*, ed. H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998).

Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation."¹⁵ Melito of Sardis took a replacement position when he declared:

The people [Israel] was precious before the church arose, and the law was marvelous before the gospel was elucidated. But when the church arose and the gospel took precedence the model was made void, conceding its power to the reality. . . . The people was made void when the church arose.¹⁶

Clement of Alexandria (c. 195) claimed that Israel "denied the Lord" and thus "forfeited the place of the true Israel."¹⁷ Tertullian (c. 197) declared, "Israel has been divorced."¹⁸ Cyprian (c. 250), too, promoted a supersessionist approach when he wrote:

I have endeavoured to show that the Jews, according to what had before been foretold, had departed from God, and had lost God's favour, which had been given them in past time, and had been promised them for the future; while the Christians had succeeded to their place, deserving well of the Lord by faith, and coming out of all nations and from the whole world.¹⁹

He also declared, "We Christians, when we pray, say Our Father; because He has begun to be ours, and has ceased to be the Father of the Jews, who have forsaken Him."²⁰ Lactantius (c. fourth cent.) expressed his supersessionist views when he stated, "But it is plain that the house of Judah does not signify the Jews, whom He casts off, but us, who have been called by Him out of the Gentiles, and have by adoption succeeded to their place, and are called sons of the Jews."²¹ Thus, while some members of the early church may not have identified their view explicitly as "replacement theology," it is a fact that many viewed the church as taking the place of national Israel as the people of God.

Thus, while some members of the early church may not have identified their view explicitly as "replacement theology," it is a fact that many viewed the church as taking the place of national Israel as the people of God.

15 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 36.2 (ANF 1:515).

16 Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, trans. S. G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 21.

17 Clement, *The Instructor* 2.8 (ANF 2:256).

18 Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews* 1 (ANF 3:152).

19 Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews* (ANF 5:507).

20 Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer* (ANF 5:450). "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts was the house of Israel; but Christ, when teaching and showing that the people of the Gentiles should succeed them, and that by the merit of faith we should subsequently attain to the place which the Jews had lost" (ANF 5:361).

21 Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* 4.20 (ANF 7:123).



Observation 2: Replacement theology was the dominant view of the church from the third century until the middle of the nineteenth century.

While the church of the Patristic Era mixed statements of replacement theology with hope for national Israel in the future,²² the end of the Patristic Era ended with Augustine's amillennialism and the belief that the church was the replacement of Israel. James Carroll points out that Augustine's attitude toward the Jews was rooted in "assumptions of supersessionism."²³ According to Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Augustine (354–430) introduced a "negative element into judgment on the Jews."²⁴ He did so by advancing the "'theory of substitution,' whereby the New Israel of the church became a substitute of ancient Israel."²⁵ The Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages was supersessionist. While varying on certain points, the first generation Reformers, including Martin Luther and John Calvin, also were supersessionists. The second generation of Reformers and the Puritans were more open to future blessings for Jews and the nation Israel, but the replacement view remained strong into the nineteenth century.²⁶

Observation 3: Since the mid-nineteenth century, replacement theology has received serious criticism and widespread rejection.

The last 150 years have seen a significant backlash against replacement theology. The rise of dispensationalism in the mid-nineteenth century brought with it a more literal understanding of the Old Testament, including its physical and land promises to the nation Israel. One foundational belief of dispensational theology is the distinction between Israel and the church which does not see the church as taking over national Israel's blessings. The challenge to replacement theology has not come solely from dispensationalism, but there is little doubt that dispensationalism brought a serious rebuttal to replacement theology.

Perspectives concerning replacement theology also have been seriously affected by two twentieth-century developments—the Holocaust and the establishment of the modern State of Israel. These events pushed questions and issues concerning Israel and the church to the forefront of Christian theology.²⁷ More than any other event, the Holocaust has been the most

22 See Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*, 35–50.

23 James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 219.

24 Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, "Christianity and Judaism, A Historical and Theological Overview," in *Jews and Christians: Exploring the Past, Present, and Future*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 20.

25 *Ibid.*

26 For more on this see Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*, 51–62.

27 "Since the tragic events of the *Shoah* and the birth of the modern State of Israel on May 14, 1948, the interest shown in God's ancient people has been widespread and sustained" (Diprose, 1).

significant factor in the church's reevaluation of supersessionism. According to Irvin J. Borowsky, "Within Christendom since the time of Hitler, there has existed a widespread reaction of shock and soul-searching concerning the Holocaust."²⁸ Peter Ochs asserts that Christian reflections on the Jews and Judaism after the Holocaust "have generated theological questions of fundamental significance."²⁹ These questions include: (1) "What are Christians to make of the persistence of the Jewish people?"; (2) "Is the Church the new Israel?"; (3) "What of Israel's sins?"; and (4) "What of Israel's land and state?"³⁰ The answers to these questions in recent years indicate a reaction against supersessionism. Clark M. Williamson states, "Post-Shoah [Destruction] theology" among contemporary theologians "criticizes the church's supersessionist ideology toward Jews and Judaism."³¹

The establishment of the State of Israel, in 1948, has also raised questions concerning Israel and the doctrine of supersessionism. Herman N. Ridderbos lists some of them:

The existence of Israel once again becomes a bone of contention, this time in a theoretical and theological sense. Do the misery and suffering of Israel in the past and in the present prove that God's doom has rested and will rest upon her, as has been alleged time and again in so-called Christian theology? Or is Israel's lasting existence and, in a way, her invincibility, God's finger in history, that Israel is the object of His special providence (*providential specialissima*) and the proof of her glorious future, the future that has been beheld and foretold by Israel's own seers and prophets?³²

Commenting on the events of the Holocaust and the establishment of the Jewish state, R. Kendall Soulen states, "Under the new conditions created by these events, Christian churches have begun to consider anew their relation to the God of Israel and the Israel of God in the light of the Scriptures

28 Irvin J. Borowsky, "Foreword," in *Jews and Christians: Exploring the Past, Present, and Future*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 11. According to Peter Ochs ("Judaism and Christian Theology," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed., ed. David F. Ford [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997], 607), "Christian theologies of Judaism have been stimulated, instructed, or chastened by the memory of the Holocaust—the Shoah ('Destruction, Desolation')." Christopher Jon Boesel ("Respecting Difference, Risking Proclamation: Faith, Responsibility and the Tragic Dimensions of Overcoming Supersessionism" [Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2002], 11) says, "Overcoming the tradition of supersessionism constitutes the heart of what is commonly understood as responsible Christian response to the Holocaust."

29 Ochs, 607.

30 Ibid.

31 Clark M. Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 7.

32 Herman N. Ridderbos, "The Future of Israel," in *Prophecy in the Making: Messages Prepared for Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Carol Stream, IL: Creation, 1971), 316.



and the gospel about Jesus."³³ This includes a "revisiting [of] the teaching of supersessionism after nearly two thousand years."³⁴

In recent years, some scholars have argued that the mission of the historical Jesus must be understood within the context of his vision for a restored Israel. As Craig A. Blaising states, "Many Biblical scholars working in historical Jesus research share the view that the teaching and mission of Jesus can only be understood in terms of Jesus' vision for the restoration of Israel."³⁵ For example, E. P. Sanders says, "What we know with almost complete assurance . . . is that *Jesus is to be positively connected with the hope for Jewish restoration.*"³⁶ John P. Meier argues, "It is within this context of restoration eschatology that Jesus' prophetic proclamation and the institution of the Twelve must be understood. . . . He addresses himself squarely to the people of Israel."³⁷ Scot McKnight argues that older conceptions of Jesus as just a spiritual teacher must be replaced with "an approach to Jesus that anchors

"As Biblical scholarship makes ever more clear that Jesus and Paul taught a future for national Israel in the eschatological plan of God, the legitimacy of a supersessionist reading of Scripture grows ever more dim to the point of vanishing altogether."

his religious genius in a national vision for Israel."³⁸ According to McKnight, "Jesus' hope was not so much the 'Church,' as the restoration of the twelve tribes (cf. Matt. 8:11-12; 10:23; and 19:28), the fulfillment of the promises of Moses to national Israel, and the hope of God's kingdom (focused on and through Israel) on earth."³⁹

The recent consensus that Jesus' mission was directly related to the restoration of national Israel has significant implications for the doctrine of supersessionism. In fact, Blaising believes it threatens the very existence of the supersessionist view: "As Biblical scholarship makes ever more clear that Jesus and Paul taught a future for national Israel in the eschato-

33 R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), x.

34 Ibid.

35 Craig A. Blaising, "The Future of Israel as a Theological Question," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:3 (2001): 438. Scot McKnight (*A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 6) adds, "Contemporary scholarship is nearly united in the view that Jesus' vision concerned Israel as a nation and not a new religion. He wanted to consummate God's promises to Israel, and he saw this taking place in the land of Israel."

36 E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 118. Emphasis in the original. Sanders categorizes how certain it is that Jesus believed various things. In the category of "certain or virtually certain," Sanders declares that "Jesus shared the world-view that I have called 'Jewish restoration eschatology'" (326). The category of "certain or virtually certain" was the highest category of certainty in Sanders' work (326-27). McKnight (10) says Jesus' vision "centered on the restoration of the Jewish nation and on the fulfillment of the covenants that God had made with the nation."

37 John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 152.

38 McKnight, 9-10.

39 Ibid., 10-11.

logical plan of God, the legitimacy of a supersessionist reading of Scripture grows ever more dim to the point of vanishing altogether."⁴⁰

The trend away from replacement theology and supersessionism has been significant. As Ochs points out, "Over the last two decades, denominational assemblies have mostly done away with the traditional doctrine that Israel's election has been transferred to the church."⁴¹

The 1967 Belgian Protestant Council on Relations Between Christians and Jews stated, "The church's claim to be the sole, new Israel of God can in no way be based on the Bible."⁴² The Joint Catholic Protestant Statement to Our Fellow Christians of 1973 declared, "The singular grace of Jesus Christ does not abrogate the covenantal relationship of God with Israel (Rom. 11:1–2). In Christ the church shares in Israel's election without superseding it."⁴³ In 1977, the Central Board of the Swiss Protestant Church Federation asserted, "Although the church, already in the New Testament, applied to herself several promises made to the Jewish people, she does not supersede the covenant people, Israel."⁴⁴

Also in 1977, the Mennonite European Regional Conference stated, "Jesus came not to destroy the Covenant of God with the Jews, but only to affirm it in a manner that would bring the blessing of God's people to non-Jews, also."⁴⁵ In 1980, the Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland declared, "We deny that the people Israel has been rejected by God or that it has been superseded by the church."⁴⁶ The Texas Conference of Churches of 1982 stated, "We reject the position that the covenant between the Jews and God was dissolved with the coming of Christ. Our conviction is grounded in the teaching of Paul in Romans, chapters 9–11, that God's gift and call are irrevocable."⁴⁷ In 1984, the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops declared, "St. Paul bears witness that the Jews have a zeal for God (Rom. 10:2); that God has not rejected His people (Rom. 11:1ff). . . . Israel continues to play an important role in the history of salvation, a role which will end only in the fulfillment of the plan of God (Rom. 11:11, 15, 23)."⁴⁸ In 1987,

40 Blaising, 439.

41 Ochs, 618. As for individuals, Ochs observes that Roy Eckardt has been "one of the most prolific contributors to the Jewish-Christian dialogue, maintaining that Christianity has not replaced Israel in the drama of human salvation" (616).

42 Helga Croner, ed. "1967 Belgian Protestant Council on Relations between Christians and Jews," in *More Stepping Stones to Jewish-Christian Relations* (New York: Paulist, 1985), 194.

43 Helga Croner, ed. "Joint Catholic Protestant Statement to Our Fellow Christians, 1973" in *Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations* (New York: Paulist, 1977), 152.

44 Alan Brockway, Paul van Buren, Rolf Rendtorff, and Simon Schoon, eds., "1977 Central Board of the Swiss Protestant Church Federation," in *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People: Statements by the World Council of Churches and Its Member Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988), 84–85.

45 Croner, "1977 Mennonite European Regional Conference," in *More Stepping Stones to Jewish-Christian Relations*, 205.

46 Brockway, et al., "Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland, 1980," in *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People*, 94.

47 Croner, "1982 Texas Conference of Churches," in *More Stepping Stones to Jewish-Christian Relations*, 186.

48 Croner, "1984 National Conference of Brazilian Bishops," in *More Stepping Stones to Jewish-Christian Relations*, 152.



the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) stated, “We affirm that the church, elected in Jesus Christ, has been engrafted into the people of God established by the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Therefore, Christians have not replaced Jews.”⁴⁹

Commenting on the various declarations from the Christian denominations, Mordecai Waxman observes, “The assertion that God repudiated the Jews and elected a new Israel in their place is put aside. Paul’s statement in Romans that God has not repudiated His covenant with the Jewish people is emphasized.”⁵⁰ As a result, supersessionism’s grip on the Christian church as a whole has been lessened significantly. In fact, it is doubtful whether the supersessionist approach is still the dominant view. As David E. Holwerda points out:

The traditional view that the Christian Church has superseded Jewish Israel, which no longer has a role in God’s plan of redemption, is no longer dominant. Even though no consensus has developed on how to evaluate the present position and future role of Jewish Israel, the negative tones prominent in the Church’s traditional view have been greatly muted.⁵¹

The above statements and declarations refute the charge of those who claim that replacement theology has never existed. A broad range of declarations from various denominations and groups shows that the traditional understanding has been that the church has replaced or superseded national Israel as the people of God. Many are now running away from the traditional view, but the traditional view has been that the church replaced Israel. These statements only make sense if the church as a whole has had a history of viewing itself as the replacement of Israel. The above quotations also show that the use of terms like “supersede” and “replace” are not the sole possession of dispensationalists who are intentionally trying to invent a pejorative title to place around the necks of their theological foes. Replacement terminology has been part of a broader discussion that goes far beyond dispensationalism.

Observation 4: Those who hold a replacement/supersessionist view have often used “replacement” terminology.

We find it somewhat hollow for some to argue against the title “replacement theology” when replacement terminology has often been used by those who believe the church is the new or true Israel. Marten Woudstra, who taught Old Testament at Calvin Seminary, observed, “The question whether

49 Brockway, et al., “Statement of the 1987 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),” in *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People*, 115.

50 Mordecai Waxman, “The Dialogue, Touching New Bases?” in *More Stepping Stones to Jewish-Christian Relations*, 25.

51 David E. Holwerda, *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 11.

it is more proper to speak of a *replacement* of the Jews by the Christian church or of an extension (continuation) of the OT people of God into that of the NT church is variously answered."⁵² As Woudstra points out, there are various ways that the relationship between Israel and the church has been viewed, and one of these ways is replacement. According to Ridderbos, "The church springs from, is born out of Israel; on the other hand, the church *takes the place of Israel* as the historical people of God."⁵³ Bruce K. Waltke writes that the New Testament teaches the "hard fact that national Israel and its law have been permanently *replaced* by the church and the New Covenant."⁵⁴ Waltke also states, "The Jewish *nation* no longer has a place as the special people of God; that place *has been taken by the Christian community* which fulfills God's purpose for Israel."⁵⁵

Hans K. LaRondelle claims the New Testament affirms that "Israel would no longer be the people of God and would be *replaced* by a people that would accept the Messiah and His message of the kingdom of God."⁵⁶ LaRondelle believes this "people" is the church who replaces "the Christ-rejecting nation."⁵⁷ Loraine Boettner, too, writes, "It may seem harsh to say that 'God is done with the Jews.' But the fact of the matter is that He is through with them as a unified national group having anything more to do with the evangelization of the world. That mission has been *taken from them* and given to the Christian Church (Matt. 21:43)."⁵⁸ R. T. France declares that Matthew 21:43 is "the most explicit statement in Matthew of the view that there is to be a new people of God *in place of* Old Testament Israel."⁵⁹

These uses of replacement terminology are just a sampling of statements from those who hold that the church is now Israel. Based on statements like these, it appears that the designation "replacement theology" has merit. For those who do not like the title "replacement theology," at least some of their displeasure should be directed to those within their camp who use this type of terminology.

52 Marten H. Woudstra, "Israel and the Church: A Case for Continuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 237. Emphasis mine. Woudstra believes that the terms "replacement" and "continuation" are both acceptable and consistent with biblical teaching.

53 Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 333–34. Emphasis mine.

54 Bruce K. Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 274. Emphasis mine.

55 *Ibid.*, 275. Second emphasis mine.

56 Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 101. Emphasis in original.

57 *Ibid.*

58 Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1957), 89–90. Emphasis mine.

59 R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 310. Emphasis mine.



Observation 5: Those who argue for “fulfillment,” “enlargement,” “expansion,” and/or “transference” language do not use different arguments than those who argue for “replacement.”

As I examine the arguments of those who argue that the church is the new or true Israel, I do not see any difference in argument between those who emphasize “replacement” terminology and those who do not. It is not the case that replacement theologians use a certain set of arguments and texts, while those who are “fulfillment theologians” utilize another set of arguments and texts. The same passages often are appealed to—Matthew 21:43; Acts 15:13–18; Romans 2:28–29; 9:6; Galatians 6:16; Ephesians 2:11–22; and 1 Peter 2:9–10. Waldron emphasizes the same passages as those who use “replacement language,” including Galatians 6:16; Romans 9:6; and Ephesians 2:11–22. I would be interested in hearing how “fulfillment” or “enlargement” proponents differ from traditional theologians who use “replacement” terminology. It does not appear to me that there is any significant difference.

Observation 6: Replacement theology is a legitimate title for the view that the church replaces, fulfills, or supersedes Israel.

Unfortunately for those who desire a different label, the titles “replacement theology” and “supersessionism” are more well established and do not appear to be going away any time soon. These are the dominant titles in both scholarly and popular literature. Plus, as we noted, many theologians who espouse a supersessionist view have used the terms “replace” and “replacement” in regard to Israel and the church. It is not simply the case that dispensationalists have imposed the title “replacement theology” against the will of supersessionists. Those who espouse the supersessionist view are partly to credit (or blame) for this title since they often have used “replacement” or similar terminology themselves.

Personally, I have no trouble with the designation “replacement theology” because with this view there is a taking away or transferring of what was promised to national Israel. One can use “fulfillment” terminology as some prefer to argue that the church fulfills Israel, but in the end the result is the same—something that was promised to the nation Israel is no longer the possession of national Israel. Israel’s promises and covenants now allegedly belong to another that is not national Israel. This other group may be called the “new” or “true” Israel by some, but this does not change the fact that what was promised to one people group—national Israel—is now the possession of another group. Jeremiah 31:35–37 (HCSB), however, promises the perpetuity of Israel as a nation:

This is what the LORD says:
The One who gives the sun for light by day,

the fixed order of moon and stars for light by night,
 who stirs up the sea and makes its waves roar —
 the LORD of Hosts is His name:

If this fixed order departs from My presence—
 [this is] the LORD's declaration—
 then also Israel's descendants will cease
 to be a nation before Me forever.

This is what the LORD says:
 If the heavens above can be measured
 and the foundations of the earth below explored,
 I will reject all of Israel's descendants
 because of all they have done—
 [this is] the LORD's declaration.

In this poem, made up of two sayings (vv. 35–36 and 37), the Lord declares what Ernest W. Nicholson has called “the impossibility of Israel being forsaken forever by God.”⁶⁰ Notice that Israel's everlasting existence as a “nation” is linked to the continued existence of the sun, moon, and stars. If a person looks into the sky and sees these cosmic bodies, he or she can have assurance that Israel's existence before God is assured. Claims that this passage should be reinterpreted so that the church is the true Israel that fulfills this passage are not satisfactory. It is the *nation* Israel that is promised a perpetual place in the plan of God, and it is the nation that will always endure as a special object of God's love.

Thus, the title “replacement theology” appears appropriate. Those who say, “I am not a replacement theologian; I am a fulfillment theologian” are not making the criticisms of replacement theology moot. Nor does it make the whole discussion of replacement theology irrelevant. Those who approach this issue should not be sidetracked by claims that “replacement theology” does not exist, only “fulfillment theology.”

So how should we handle this issue of terminology? First, I think we should focus more on the concept than the title. While I often use the titles “supersessionism” and “replacement theology,” I am addressing an idea more so than trying to further the acceptance of a title. Second, we should respect those who prefer “fulfillment” terminology over “replacement.” If I am talking to a person who feels this way, I do not say, “You are not a fulfillment theologian, you are a replacement theologian! Too bad!” That approach is not helpful. Yet the titles “replacement theology” and “supersessionism” are well established. And it is these two designations that I will continue to use.



60 Ernest W. Nicholson, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Chapters 26–52* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 72.

Observation 7: Those who do not like the title “replacement theology” have not offered an adequate substitute that is agreed upon.

Yes, some who believe the church is the new, or true, Israel have expressed displeasure with the title “replacement theology.” And yes, several have offered terms or titles they prefer. But as I read books or Web sites that address this issue, there is no consensus on what is a better term or title. Some say “continuation.” Some say “transference.” Others say “expansion.” Others offer “enlargement.” And the list goes on. But it is not enough to merely criticize a title. The critics need to offer a better substitute that they can agree upon, but so far none has been offered. In the meantime, the titles “replacement theology” and “supersessionism” appear to be the best titles used in scholarly discussions.

Observation 8: Nations and promises to nations are not unspiritual nor are they things that need to be transcended.

Replacement theology/fulfillment theology makes a foundational error on this point. There is a lot of talk about Israel being redefined and physical and land promises being transcended by greater spiritual realities, but where does the Bible ever indicate that nations are unspiritual or are lesser types that must give way to greater spiritual realities? Or where does the Bible indicate that physical and land promises are lesser realities that give way to better spiritual truths? My question to those who believe this is, “What is wrong with nations? What is wrong with physical blessings?” The New Testament reaffirms the future relevance of the nation Israel (Matt 19:28; Acts 1:6; Rom 11:26). It reaffirms the future significance of Jerusalem (Luke 21:24). It reaffirms the future significance of a temple in Jerusalem (see Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:4). It reaffirms the future of nations and kings of nations (Rev 21:24, 26). Thus, I do not accept the premise that the nation Israel is an entity that God intended to be transcended. That is partly why I am not impressed with alleged “fulfillment theology.” I do not believe that God transcends eternal and unconditional promises.

Observation 9: Titles sometimes stick whether we like them or not.

One of the realities of life in the realm of theology is that titles for certain views often stick, even if we do not like those titles or would prefer another. I am a proud dispensationalist but I do not think the title “dispensationalism” is perfect. John Feinberg has correctly observed that believing in dispensations no more makes one a dispensationalist than believing in covenants makes one a covenant theologian.⁶¹ Yet for various reasons this title has stuck and I accept it. I do not like the title “covenant theology” be-

61 John Feinberg, “Systems of Discontinuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 69.

cause covenant theology is based on covenants (works, grace, redemption) that are not found in the Bible. In an ironic way dispensationalists are more deserving of the title “covenant theology” since dispensationalists base their theology on actual covenants found in the Bible (Abrahamic, Davidic, new). But these titles—dispensationalism and covenant theology—are the accepted titles, and I accept them.

Jay Adams has expressed displeasure with the title “amillennialism.” This term literally means “no millennium” but amillennialists do believe in a millennium. To say that amillennialists do not believe in a millennium would be an error. Amillennialists do believe in a millennium, they just believe (incorrectly so, in my opinion) that the millennium is fulfilled spiritually between the two comings of Christ and not as a future kingdom after the second coming of Christ. That is why Adams has proposed the title “realized millennialism.”⁶² Yet even so, there has not been a movement amongst amillennial theologians to change the title to realized millennialism or some other designation, and rightfully so. To do so would add needless confusion.

In the realm of apologetics, those who are presuppositionalists have sometimes expressed displeasure with the title “presuppositionalism,” but this is the title that has become accepted and there seems little reason to try to reinvent the title. My point here is that sometimes titles stick for better or for worse. In my study of the relevant literature, the titles “replacement theology” and “supersessionism” are the accepted designations and it does not appear that will change anytime soon. The fact that a few theologians in the last five years or so are now expressing displeasure with these designations is not enough reason for these titles to be rejected or for all literature that uses these terms to be considered irrelevant.

Thomas Ice makes a good point regarding the appropriateness of the title “replacement theology”:

We have a number of expressions within Americana that illustrate one who is not willing to exercise truth in labeling. For example we may say, “If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, and smells like a duck, then it must be a duck.” Or, Shakespeare said it more eloquently: “A rose by any other name is still a rose.” That dictum is true when it comes to some evangelicals who teach replacement theology but then will not own up to what they actually advocate.⁶³

Some Personal Thoughts on the Titles “Replacement Theology” and “Supersessionism”

I do want to make a personal statement about the claim that replacement theology is just a pejorative term invented by dispensationalists. It was in 1999 that I decided to do some formal study of the view that the church

62 Jay E. Adams, *The Time Is at Hand* (Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, 2004).

63 Thomas Ice, “Neo-Replacement Theology,” Pre-Trib Research Center, <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-NeoReplacementTheolo.pdf> (accessed November 25, 2010).



is the replacement, continuation, or fulfillment of Israel. As I embarked on this study, I wanted to use the best terminology that was theologically accurate. Around this time, three authors were significant. In 1994, Walter Kaiser offered the following definition of replacement theology: "Replacement theology . . . declared that the Church, Abraham's spiritual seed, had replaced national Israel in that it had transcended and fulfilled

the terms of the covenant given to Israel, which covenant Israel had lost because of disobedience."⁶⁴ Around 2000, Ronald Diprose defined replacement theology as the view that "the Church completely and permanently replaced ethnic Israel in the working out of God's plan and as recipient of Old Testament promises to Israel."⁶⁵ Soulen also addressed this issue, opting for the term "supersessionism": "According to this teaching [supersessionism], God chose the Jewish people after the fall of Adam in order to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Savior. After Christ came, however, the special role of the Jewish people came to an end and its place was taken by the church, the new Israel."⁶⁶ While Kaiser and Diprose have theological views akin to dispensationalism at points, I do not think they are involved with pushing a dispensational agenda. Soulen, a professor at Wesley Theological Seminary, definitely was not a dispensationalist. Many other works also used these designations. I never felt at any point that "replacement theology" or "supersessionism" was part of some alleged dispensational plot against non-dispensationalists. As part of the vetting process for my dissertation and two books (one by a European publisher and the other by an American) on this topic, nothing was ever said about pejorative language or unfair terminology.

In my works I have tried to nuance my discussion by purposefully including a variety of terms including "fulfill" and "continue," along with "replace" and "supersede." But I remain convinced that while a full range of terms should be used, the titles "replacement theology" and "supersessionism" are still appropriate titles for the view that the church is the new, or true, Israel.

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64 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "An Assessment of 'Replacement Theology': The Relationship Between the Israel of the Abrahamic-Davidic Covenant and the Christian Church," *Mishkan*, no. 21 (1994): 9.

65 Diprose, 2.

66 Soulen, 1-2.

Rev. James Craig, Irish Presbyterian Missionary to German Jews

THE LEGITIMACY OF ISRAEL



by **Nicholas Michael Railton**

Just a few yards away from the gigantic bust of Karl Marx in Highgate Cemetery, London, lie the remains of James Craig (1818–99). Present at his burial were Charles H. Irwin and D. James Legg of the Religious Tract Society, Craig's last employer. No representatives of the Irish Presbyterian Church were in attendance, and it is true to say that he has long been forgotten by his mother church. Symptomatic of this forgetfulness is the reference by Finlay Holmes in *Our Irish Presbyterian Heritage* to Rev. Samuel Craig as the Assembly's missionary in Hamburg.¹ Robert Allen is correct, of course, when he states in his book on Arnold Frank that the Scottish-born Samuel Craig—Presbyterian minister at Crossroads, county Derry, from 1805 until his death in 1854—was not a missionary, but the father of the Assembly's third appointment as missionary to Jews.²

Allen has provided us with a brief overview of Craig's work in Hamburg as has Sam Hutchinson in a chapter on Jewish missions.³ The most detailed source on the life and work of James Craig is the rather hagiographic biography produced by his daughter shortly before his death in 1899.⁴ Jane Craig had access to diaries and letters, which seem to have been lost during the blitz of London in the Second World War. The source base for any objective study of his life is therefore somewhat limited.

James Craig bore the fruit of the revival of spiritual life in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century. Missionaries

1 Finlay Holmes, *Our Irish Presbyterian Heritage* (Belfast: Publication Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1992), 120. This mistake is repeated by Dan Cohn-Sherbok in his work *Messianic Judaism* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 42.

2 Robert Allen, *Arnold Frank of Hamburg* (London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., n.d. [1966]), 37. The first two appointments were of Rev. William Graham of Dundonald, who went to Beirut and, later, Bonn, and Rev. Smylie Robson of Maghera, who went to Damascus.

3 Sam Hutchinson, "The Salvation of Israel: The Story of the Jewish Mission," in *Into All the World: A History of 150 Years of the Overseas Work of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, ed. Jack Thompson (Belfast: Overseas Board of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1990), 131–33.

4 Jane P. Craig, *The Gospel on the Continent: Incidents in the Life of James Craig, M.A., D.D., Ph.D.* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895).

were often guests in his father's home, and they ignited an initial interest in the young boy, who was translating New Testament verses into and out of Greek at the age of eight.⁵ As a teenager Craig was a tutor to a number of young lads, including, his biographer tells us, Josias Leslie Porter. He taught in one of his father's Sabbath schools and this line of work would remain a permanent feature of his labors.

While a student in Belfast, he attended the meeting house of Dr. John Edgar, who had the same Seceder background as himself. In the Alfred Place Church, he soon became secretary of the Sabbath school superintended by John Arnold.⁶ On being appointed a teacher in Liverpool in the spring of 1840, he supervised the Sabbath schools in the Mount Pleasant United Secession Church, originally established by Scottish Seceders and at the time pastored by Hugh Crichton (†1871). Teaching the Scriptures to young and old alike remained a central focus of his life in Germany.

In Liverpool, he also gained experience in the art of establishing a new congregation. On the corner of Salisbury Street, the Irish Islington Presbyterian Church was opened in January 1845 to supply the needs of lapsed Irish Presbyterian immigrants.⁷ From December 10, 1843, a hall was hired—at Craig's own expense—as a preaching station. The establishment of a new church led to a rather bitter dispute between the presbyteries of Lancaster and Belfast, which was only allayed when the General Assembly disclaimed "any intention of invading the jurisdiction or territory of the English Synod."⁸ The same problem of sheep-stealing bedeviled the missionary work of Craig in Hamburg, Schleswig, and Holstein, where neither the Jewish congregations nor the Lutheran Church took kindly to an outsider's evangelism.

The question regarding the factors leading to Craig's interest in the Jews is more difficult to answer. His daughter's biography provides few clues. The Larger Catechism, in its answer to Question 191, no doubt played a role:

In the second petition (which is, *Thy kingdom come*), acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray, that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called,⁹ the fullness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished

5 Ibid., 5.

6 Ibid., 16.

7 Ibid., 26–28. See John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The History of the Liverpool-Irish, 1800–1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 9. Ironically, in 1910 the building was used as a Jewish synagogue.

8 *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* (Belfast: Presbyterian Church in Ireland, General Assembly, 1850), 315, 381.

9 This phrase also appears in the Independents' Savoy Confession of Faith (1658): "In the later days Anti-christ being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of (Christ) broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition than they have enjoyed." For a wider discussion of the issue, see the article by Richard L. Pratt, Jr. entitled "To The Jew First, A Reformed Perspective," *The*

with all gospel officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate: that the new ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed, and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted: that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him forever. . . .

John Calvin,¹⁰ John Owen, Matthew Henry, Charles Hodge, and many other Reformed theologians held to the view that the Jews would one day be converted to faith in Jesus the Messiah and be nationally restored.¹¹ At home for two hours every Sunday, Craig listened to the words of Reformed and Puritan writers being read out by his father, and from these we suspect he developed his own understanding of the importance of missions to Jews.¹²

The Jewish Mission of the General Assembly

In 1838, sixteen overtures were presented by various presbyteries and synods to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, calling on it to establish a mission to the Jews. The Assembly in that year unanimously approved of this objective and appointed a committee to consider the matter. It reported, and on May 26, 1838, an act of the Assembly on the conversion of the Jews was passed—the first act of any Christian church as a church to

Mountain Retreat, <http://www.mountainretreatorg.net/articles/jewsfirst.html> (accessed January 5, 2011). The article is contained in the volume *To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008).

- 10 On Calvin's relationship to the Jews see Jacques Courvoisier, "Calvin und die Juden. Zu einem Streitgespräch," in *Christen und Juden. Ihr Gegenüber vom Apostelkonzil bis heute*, ed. Wolf-Dieter Marsch and Karl Thieme (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 1961), 141–46; *Kirche und Israel. Ein Beitrag der reformatorischen Kirchen Europas zum Verhältnis von Christen und Juden* [Leuenberger Texte 6] (Frankfurt/M: Lembeck, 2001), 39f; I. John Hesselink, "Calvin's Understanding of the Relation of the Church and Israel Based Largely on His Interpretation of Romans 9–11," *Ex Auditu* 4 (1988): 59–69. For a Jewish view, see the article by Salo W. Baron in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, "John Calvin," Jewish Virtual Library, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/judaica/ejud_0002_0004_0_03871.html (accessed January 5, 2011).
- 11 Fred Klett, "What's Being Said and Done among American Presbyterians?" *Mishkan*, no. 36 (2002): 45–54. See the various comments on the Jewish people at <http://www.chaim.org/reformers.html>. For studies on American Presbyterian views, see Pamela D. Webster, "John Neander—The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and Proselytising the Jews, 1848–1876," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 75, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 1–12; Yaakov Ariel, "Eschatology, Evangelism, and Dialogue: The Presbyterian Mission to the Jews, 1920–1960," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 75, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 29–41; Stephen R. Haynes, "Presbyterians and Jews: A Theological Exploration of 'The Book of Confessions,'" *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 15, no. 3 (1988): 249–67. For background studies, see Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: A Study of Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975); *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660*, ed. Peter Toon (Cambridge-London: J. Clarke, 1970); Mel Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties: A Study of the Efforts to Convert the Jews in Britain, up to the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).
- 12 Craig, 34.



work for the salvation of the Jews.¹³ A copy of this act, together with a letter from the Committee's convener, Dr. Stevenson MacGill,¹⁴ explaining the steps that had been taken, was sent to ministers of the Synod of Ulster.¹⁵

It was Robert Murray McCheyne (Dundee) who addressed the General Assembly on Friday, July 10, 1840, on the matter of Jewish missions, not so much sowing new seed in Irish soil as watering and fostering the growth of ideas circulating for some time in Ulster.¹⁶ The General Assembly, at its meeting in 1842, resolved:

[T]his Church, deeply humbled for its neglect of the family of Israel, renews its pledge to seek, by all possible means, the salvation of God's ancient people; recommends that this subject be kept before the prayerful attention of its ministers and members; and directs that, on the second Sabbath in March next, collections be made in all its Churches on behalf of the Jewish Mission.¹⁷

David Hamilton (1805–60), the secretary of the Assembly's Jewish mission,¹⁸ suggested a prayer meeting for the Jewish people be established in every

“We know that in praying for Israel we are doing that which is peculiarly pleasing to Him who is Israel's God. They are yet His covenant people.”

congregation: “We know that in praying for Israel we are doing that which is peculiarly pleasing to Him who is Israel's God. They are yet His covenant people.”¹⁹ The mission to the Jews was to be an expression of the whole church's witness to a covenant-keeping God. Six ideas animated Presbyterians in this mission:

13 *A Course of Lectures on the Jews by Ministers of the Established Church in Glasgow* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1839), iii–v.

14 Stevenson MacGill (1765–1840) was unanimously elected moderator of the General Assembly in 1828. From 1814 he was professor of theology in the University of Glasgow.

15 *Ibid.*, vi–xi.

16 McCheyne's sermon of November 17, 1839, on “Our Duty to Israel,” written following his return from Palestine, is printed in Andrew A. Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of the Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne, Minister of St. Peter's Church, Dundee* (Edinburgh-London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1913), 489–97.

17 “Second Annual Report of the Assembly's Jewish Mission, Presented to the Assembly at Its Annual Meeting in Derry, July 1844,” in *Fourth Annual Report of the Home and Foreign Missions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, July 1844* (Belfast: Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1844), 31.

18 See “The Late Rev. David Hamilton, Minister of York Street Presbyterian Church, Belfast, and Secretary of the Assembly's Jewish Mission,” *The Missionary Herald of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* [hereafter *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland*] (February 1, 1860): 481–82. “The Late Rev. David Hamilton,” *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1, 1860): 514f. The Rev. David Hamilton was called to Belfast in 1840 to become the first minister of the newly-built church in York Street. He died January 13, 1860. In Hamilton's grave in Clifton Street Cemetery lie the remains of Solomon Dan, the first convert of the Irish Presbyterian Jewish mission in Bonn, Germany, who died November 20, 1856, aged 26.

19 “Second Annual Report of the Assembly's Jewish Mission,” 30.

1. The Jews are God's chosen, covenant people who are still beloved for their fathers' sakes. There was an unbreakable tie between Abraham and his posterity. Love for the God of Israel entailed a practical love for Israel itself.
2. The Jews are brethren of the Lord our Redeemer who, according to the flesh, was a Jew. It was impossible to be a disciple of Christ without having a deep love for His people. Like Paul, Christians should desire and pray to God that Israel may be saved.
3. From the Jewish people we have received God's inspired words, the words of eternal life. "Salvation is of the Jews"—there was no other source. Christians should feel deep gratitude to the Jews for providing the world with the riches of God's Word.
4. No church could be considered apostolical which did not work for the salvation of Jews. Christ and his disciples went first to the lost sheep of Israel—"to the Jew first and also to the Greek" was the apostolic strategy and pattern which Christians seeking to be faithful to their Lord should follow.
5. The church that actively sought to bring the gospel to Jewish people would prosper in every way: "They shall prosper who love Jerusalem"—"Blessed is he that blesseth Israel; and cursed is he that curseth Israel." The revivals in the towns of Kilsyth and Dundee in 1839 took place at precisely the time that Church had sent out a delegation to report on the conditions under which Jews were living in Europe and Palestine—a clear sign of divine approval, it was thought.²⁰
6. The final point mentioned by the mission's secretary was eschatological in character. The ingathering of the Jews would take place, it was believed, previous to the final ingathering of the Gentiles into the fold of Christ and was a means which the Lord had ordained for accomplishing that great end. Gentiles would one day come to the light of the Lord in Zion (readers were directed to Isaiah chapters 59 and 60).²¹

Ordination

On February 4, 1845, Craig was licensed to preach the gospel by the Belfast presbytery. Not least because he had been top of his Hebrew class throughout his college years, he was appointed to undertake missionary work among Jews in Hamburg on an annual salary of £250. On April 10, 1845, the twenty-six year old was ordained for that task. Rev. Samuel Hanna, professor of divinity, preached the ordination sermon; his own father led in prayer. Hanna said on that occasion:

20 Don Chambers, "Prelude to the Last Things: The Church of Scotland's Mission to the Jews," *Scottish Church History Society Records* 19, no. 1 (1975): 51 (fn. 33), 54; Robert Smith, *Early Days of the Mission to the Jews at Pesth* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1893), 5.

21 Smith, 29f.



The church of your fathers sends you to seek the salvation of the house of Israel. Your first and greatest concern will be to say to the seed of Abraham: Behold your king! But we, on no account, wish you to confine your labours to them. Bear in mind that one soul is as dear to the Lord as another. You will remember that your field of labour is in a land where rationalism, with its baneful influence, has long reigned supreme. You will make yourself familiar with all the phases of unbelief that now prevail in the land of Luther, and be ready to grapple with the insidious arguments that are employed against the truth of God. You will watch the leadings of Providence, and be ready to enter wherever a door is open for you to preach the gospel.²²

Craig would indeed have many spiritual battles with Lutheran rationalism and widespread unbelief, inside and outside German churches. On May 16, 1845, he arrived in the north German port city, which at the time had a population of almost 200,000, of which about 16,000 were Jews. A further 4,000 Jews lived in the neighboring town of Altona, which also became a center of Presbyterian missionary activity.²³ Craig was not the first missionary from Britain and Ireland to work in the towns. George Demster Mudie, pastor of the so-called English Reformed Church in Hamburg from 1818 to 1821, had done work for the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. He had hoped to bring about “that Millennial day” when God’s light would shine not only on Germany, but on the whole world.²⁴ Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the London Society had missionaries stationed in Hamburg. Craig enjoyed much fellowship in this English Reformed church. Scottish, English, and American Baptists supported the work of Johann Gerhard Oncken in the city; he, too, sought to win Jews for Jesus.²⁵ With the ordained ministers of the other churches, however, Craig failed to build meaningful relationships. He was vehemently critical of the state of religion in Hamburg: “[T]he Protestantism of the Churches in the city is far from being the religion of the Bible. Where eighteen parish clergy out of twenty-four decide that it is not necessary to name the name of the Lord Jesus in Baptism; where a Christianity without an atonement, a religion without miracles, a humanity without original sin, a futurity without a judgment and without punishment, a God who does not interfere with the things of earth is preached from the pulpits to empty benches, it is no wonder that many exclaim, ‘Popery would be better than this.’”²⁶ Little changed in Craig’s assessment of the religious state of

22 Craig, 37.

23 The estimates on the number of Jews are those of Rev. John C. Moore (*The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* [June 1, 1869]: 335). Only a minority of these Jews were Orthodox, most were Reform.

24 Rev. G. D. Mudie letter, May 24, 1819, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, School of Asian and African Studies, University of London (Incoming Correspondence 1798–1843, box 2).

25 *The Baptist Missionary Magazine* 26, no. 6 (June 1846): 137. Oncken also worked for the Edinburgh Bible Society.

26 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (March 1, 1865): 483.

northern Germany during his thirty-year residence in Hamburg. There was no theological basis on which he could cooperate with local churches. Only Baptists and Congregationalists, mainly associated with British churches, sympathized with his mission. "Fighting our way here inch by inch," he wrote after twenty years of service in Germany, "in a place where Satan's seat is, and in a state of society worse than in heathen lands,"²⁷ he often struggled against forces of despair.

Scottish Influences

Before Craig went to Germany, however, he had been directed first to make contact with ministers of the Free Church of Scotland who were on the General Assembly's Committee on the Conversion of the Jews. In Edinburgh Dr. Robert S. Candlish (St. George's), Dr. John Duncan (Milton Church, later missionary to the Jews in Pesth), the philosopher and Luther scholar Sir William Hamilton,²⁸ Dr. Horatius Bonar (Kelso, from 1866 Chalmers Memorial), Rev. Alexander Moody-Stuart (St. Luke's, later convener of Jewish Mission of the Free Church of Scotland from 1847 to 1889), and the writer on prophecy Dr. Alexander Keith (St. Cyrus) received him and provided letters of introduction. In Glasgow he saw Dr. David Brown (St. James'), Dr. Alexander Neil Somerville (Clyde Street), Dr. Andrew Bonar (Collace, Perthshire), and Dr. Robert Buchanan (Tron Church).²⁹ The visit testified to the inspiring role played by these and other Church of Scotland ministers in developing missionary concern for God's chosen people.

The writings of these men, especially those that touched upon prophecy, played a significant role in shifting the traditional eschatological focus of some Irish Presbyterians. Duncan, Buchanan, and Somerville contributed to a series of lectures organized by the Western Sub-committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, which were delivered in Glasgow in 1839.³⁰ These aimed to stir the hearts of the Scottish church and to awaken it to her duties toward Jewish people. Of interest is the clearly stated understanding behind the lectures and, indeed, the whole Scottish mission: The conversion of the Jews was said to be "a *hinge* [italics in the original] upon which many of the most important prophecies of the word of God to the Christian church turns."³¹ The man widely viewed as the real father of the

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27 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (February 1, 1867): 27.

28 At this time, Hamilton was working on a study of Luther and Lutherans.

29 Craig, 34f.

30 *A Course of Lectures on the Jews*. Candlish was convener of the Edinburgh sub-committee; he proposed that Robert Murray McCheyne and Andrew Bonar should be part of the mission of enquiry to Palestine. Alexander Keith and Dr. Alexander Black, Professor of Divinity in Marischal College, Aberdeen, made up the delegation.

31 *Ibid.*, xii.

mission, Robert Wodrow, in his memorial of February 1838 to the Glasgow Presbytery, noted at the start the clear connection in Scripture “betwixt the restoration of the Jewish people, and the full and universal establishment of Christ’s kingdom among the Gentiles.” It was “utterly vain,” the memorial argued in expounding the eleventh of Romans, to expect the latter event until the former had taken place.³² What is more, the conversion of the Jews was certain, a thing decreed by divine grace: God had not rejected His people. The 460-page volume of lectures was published and distributed in Belfast by William McComb. One suspects that Craig had already obtained a copy.

Confident that their work was firmly grounded on Scripture, the Church of Scotland’s Committee for Jewish Mission invited the directors of the Assembly’s Jewish mission to cooperate with them in forming a united mission station in Palestine, to which country the first Irish Presbyterian missionary was sent.³³ From Presbyterian Scotland, rather than from the largely Anglican Irish auxiliary of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (est. 1809), came the impulse to reach Jewish people with the gospel.

Criticism and Resistance

While Craig cooperated with Congregationalists and Baptists on the mission field, his relationship with the pastors in Hamburg was, from the start, very strained. He was perceived by many Lutherans to be an exotic outsider, with narrow sectarian tendencies. Irish Calvinism and German Lutheranism did not mix well. There were a number of causes. Prior to the revolution of 1848, there was little or no understanding in Hamburg for the work of an Irish missionary. A number of vehemently critical reports appeared in the press which sowed seeds of suspicion in this regard. In the press Craig’s small church was compared with a lunatic asylum.³⁴ Religious toleration and equality before the law were things of the future. The provincial church of Hamburg had rarely, since the Reformation, given much thought to the idea of converting Jews. The Hamburg-Altona Bible Society distributed Luther’s translation which included the apocryphal books—something Craig could not tolerate.³⁵ The Hamburg Home Missionary Society, with which Craig was for a time associated, lost his confidence when resolutions were passed that its meetings were not to be opened with prayer and worship, nor were there to be other devotional exercises performed within the establishments it maintained.³⁶ Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg—his *Chris-*

32 *Ibid.*, 221 (footnote).

33 *Second Annual Report of the Home and Foreign Mission of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, July 1842* (Belfast: Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1842), 29–31.

34 “Die neue Irrenanstalt im Hause der Partiotischen Gesellschaft in Hamburg,” *Die Reform*, no. 38 (1848): 151; “An den Prediger Herrn Dr. Craig,” *Die Reform*, no. 42 (1848): 167.

35 Craig, 42.

36 *Ibid.*, 103.

tology of the Old Testament will be known to many in Ireland—attacked Craig in his widely read journal. In 1857, the Berlin theologian complained that when Craig had the same experience as other missionaries—that the Lord had, for the present, closed the door of access to the Jew—instead of meekly sitting down and patiently waiting till the times change, he had presumptuously turned to the Christians, for whose benefit he had no commission whatever to work.³⁷

Proselytism disturbed relations with even those Christians who thought as he did. Craig constantly reminded Lutheran pastors that they had virtually all neglected to evangelize the Jewish minority and evangelism was, at that time, virtually unheard-of in Germany. For such activities there was little understanding or sympathy. The Lutheran state church was happy with the status quo and did not wish to unsettle the delicate relationships with minority groups. “The pious people in town, and the pious pastors, would, in general, rather warn the Jews against coming to see and to hear me than otherwise,” Craig lamented.³⁸ Even those clergy who treated him with kindness and consideration looked unfavorably upon his work in their midst.³⁹ Anti-Semitism was one aspect of this resistance and the older Luther’s hatred of the Jews left its impression on the German mind.⁴⁰ “The high Lutheran, or semi-Papist party, which stands under the influence of Mr. Harms of Hermannsburg,⁴¹ declare it, as an article of their creed,” Craig wrote on January 29, 1864, “that to seek the good of Israel is to deny the Christian faith, and the friend of the Jew is the enemy of Christ.” He added: “I am not aware of any voice of high standing being raised in favour of the Jew, and, if we exempt Delitzsch⁴² and a few others, we cannot boast much of the influence on our side. We must then act like the little hammer in the smith’s forge and by greater diligence make up for the want of the weight of the sledge.”⁴³

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Strict Lutherans, clergy and lay, treated him and members of his congregation of sympathizers with “very unnecessary severity” whenever they had opportunity. In November 1866, he spoke of the “fierce opposition”

37 *Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung*, no. 88 (November 4, 1857): 972; *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (May 1, 1858): 68; Craig, 75.

38 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (February 1, 1859).

39 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (March 1, 1860): 499.

40 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1, 1864).

41 Ludwig Harms (1808–65), founder of the Hermannsburg Mission.

42 Franz Delitzsch (1813–90), translator of the New Testament into Hebrew. In 1880, he established the Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig for the training of missionary workers among Jews.

43 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (March 1, 1864): 259. Here the name is wrongly printed as “Farnes of Kermanusburg.” See also the “Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Assembly’s Jewish Mission (Belfast, June 1868),” *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (July 1, 1868): 92.



from a section of the Lutheran clergy.⁴⁴ “We have known what it was to have servants turned out of employment, tradesmen deprived of work, the common courtesies of social life denied because the parties concerned attended our church”—the list of petty and bitter persecutions was long.⁴⁵ “It would almost shut a wealthy family out of the social circle in which they move, if known to belong to us,” he lamented.⁴⁶ The growth in attendances at his meetings were mocked as “mushroom growth.”

Apart from orthodox Lutheran opposition to his presence in Germany, Craig found many critics amongst Orthodox Jews. Many Jewish people appeared deaf to the words of Christians—and who could blame them? “[I]n your vocabulary his name is synonymous with perfidy, deceit, and villainy of every kind,” the readers of *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* were reminded, in an editorial. “[Y]ou make him pay (in most countries more than double) for a Government which despises, but does not protect him; and he must fight your battles, but he cannot share the rewards of victory; you have, in a word, despised, hated, persecuted, plundered him, and that in all countries, and for many ages, and now you take it upon you to convert him to your faith! Thus the Jew reasons, and with some semblance of right.”⁴⁷ Craig accepted that it was for him “a source of anxiety and regret” that he appeared to have greater influence over the Gentiles in Hamburg than over the Jews. Few attended his meetings. Yet, he argued, he still spent most mornings speaking with Jews in his home. The need for individual Christians to befriend Jewish people, welcome them into their homes and in this way break down the dividing wall between Jew and Christian remained the key evangelistic method used by Craig and his band of volunteers.⁴⁸

On the other hand, he also recognized that the motives of most of those who did call on him were not particularly noble—“but what else can be expected?” Jews sought knowledge of English or contacts in the English-speaking world, to where they hoped one day to depart. Others sought food and clothing, which Craig seems to have routinely declined to provide.⁴⁹ They rarely needed schooling; the Jewish community in Hamburg and elsewhere provided a secular education as good and as cheap as anything a missionary could offer.⁵⁰ “From the migrating habits which they have formed in early life,” he explained to his convener, Jews—and especially Jewish proselytes—did “not generally continue long” under his

44 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (February 1, 1867): 27.

45 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (March 1, 1860): 499f.

46 *Ibid.*, 500.

47 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1, 1861): 741.

48 In his welcome address to Rev. John C. Aston on January 1, 1874, Craig reemphasizes the importance of friendship evangelism and lay involvement in mission work among Jews (*The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* [March 2, 1874]: 300).

49 “I do not think that to feed and clothe men who have no employment is favourable to the development of Christian life. It would be very different if, for the sake of Christianity, they had been reduced to poverty” (*The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* [July 1, 1868]: 91).

50 “Twentieth Annual Report of the Assembly’s Jewish Mission (Belfast, July 1862),” *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (August 1, 1862): 125.

care.⁵¹ Most of the strangers who called on him came from Poland and Russia, fleeing persecution in those countries, yet the hostile attitude of the authorities in Hamburg ensured that most moved on.⁵²

A New Church

Craig did not underestimate the side effects of turning nominal, worldly Christians into servants of the Messiah. He hoped for a more tolerant attitude towards Jews from real Christians. In 1860 he could count on the help of about fifty volunteers who aided in the evangelization of Jews. Craig estimated that in his first fifteen years of residence in Hamburg he had instructed over seventy Jews and Jewesses who had embraced Christianity.⁵³ Many of these moved away from Hamburg, in search of new opportunities abroad, but those that remained became active and consistent members of the church. Weekly he would have between twenty and two hundred discussions with Jews.⁵⁴ Where he did succeed in leading Jews to Christ, most allowed themselves to be baptized elsewhere so that it became impossible for Craig to form a congregation consisting solely of Jewish converts.⁵⁵ In letters to *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland*, he reminded people in Ireland that, from the start, he had been commissioned to preach to both Jews and Gentiles.

The church, made up of committed and dedicated Christians, had become “a centre of life and a witness against the prevailing errors of the day.”⁵⁶ And yet few Jews had been converted and their progress as Christians had been less satisfactory than that of Gentiles.⁵⁷ To improve the success of his work among Jewish people, Craig came to believe that a new-style Gentile church was “the very condition of the existence of a Jewish Mission” in northern Germany. Just as Luther had come to view the Catholic Church as wholly inadequate to communicate the gospel to Jews, so Craig quickly learned that the Lutheran Church had become just as inadequate. He was not alone in thinking that a non-mainstream church was a prerequisite for evangelistic success in Germany.

One Jewish convert whom Craig refused to baptize was Israel Pick. He would later establish his own small fellowship in München-Gladbach, called the Amen Fellowship, whose members would later immigrate *en masse* to Palestine.⁵⁸ Elsewhere in the Rhineland, the Assembly’s first missionary to

51 “Sixteenth Annual Report of the Assembly’s Jewish Mission,” *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (August 1, 1858): 125.

52 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1, 1871): 296; (April 1, 1872): 558; (July–August 1872): 617.

53 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1, 1860): 513.

54 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (August 1, 1860): 587.

55 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (March 1, 1860): 499.

56 *Ibid.*, 500.

57 *Ibid.*, 501.

58 Catherine Edward, *Missionary Life Among the Jews in Moldavia, Galicia and Silesia: Memoir and Letters of Mrs. Edward, with Preface by Rev. A. Moody Stuart* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1867), 274–77; Israel Pick, *Life from the Dead: A Word to My*



the Jews, William Graham, similarly called for a new ecclesiastical experiment. On April 7, 1861, Rev. John Macnaughtan of Belfast opened a mission chapel in Bonn (Lennéstrasse 30) which was a kind of “alliance church,” encompassing various denominational backgrounds.⁵⁹ In Pesth—today a part of Budapest—one of Craig’s colleagues in Hamburg, the Dutchman Adrian van Anandel,⁶⁰ was nominated by him to head up, first, the Free Church of Scotland’s mission school in the town and, in 1860, a mission church.⁶¹ In Breslau another Scottish missionary, Daniel Edward (1815–96) established a Free Evangelical church the same year.⁶² The establishment of mission churches aimed to provide a refuge for Jews and other dissenters from the established church.

A plot of land was found in Hamburg, and the elders and deacons of the church secured it with a down payment of £500. A further £500 was needed to pay for the land and a further £1,700 to erect a suitable building. At the time, they were meeting each Sabbath morning in a Masonic lodge and in the evening in a smaller hall.⁶³ The report of the Assembly’s Jewish Mission in 1860 underlined clearly the congregation’s need for their own building. The matter was put before the Mission Board which unanimously resolved:

... feeling the great importance of having suitable Mission premises at Hamburg, and being grateful to God for the measure of success granted to the work of their brother, Dr Craig, and for the spirit of enlarged liberality manifested by his congregation, [we] agree to recommend this matter to the General Assembly, and request Dr. Craig to remain and submit it to their consideration.⁶⁴

Events took their course. A contract with the builder was signed on June 24, 1861, the foundation stone laid on August 5, and the roof was on by

People (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), iv–ix; *Neueste Nachrichten aus dem Morgenlande* (1858): 265–67.

59 Nicholas M. Railton, “The Dreamy Mazes of Millenarianism’: William Graham and the Irish Presbyterian Mission to German Jews,” in *Protestant Millennialism, Evangelicalism, and Irish Society, 1790-2005*, ed. Crawford Gribben and Andrew Holmes (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 189.

60 On Anandel, see Karl Heinz Voigt, “Adrian van Anandel,” *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* 14 (1998): 707–12; Abraham Kovács, “The History of the Free Church of Scotland’s Mission to the Jews in Budapest, and Its Impact on the Hungarian Reformed Church 1841–1914” (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 2003), 128–39, 151–59, 168.

61 “Denkschrift für unsere evangelischen Glaubensgenossen in Deutschland und der Schweiz,” *Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt aus und für Rheinland und Westphalen*, no. 20 (October 4, 1860): 372–75.

62 *Die Freie Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands und ihre Gegner. Om Verfassere von “Hiob’s Drei Freunden”* (Hamburg: Nolte, 1861); “Erklärung in Beziehung auf die Bildung der ‘freien evang. Gemeinde’ in Breslau,” *Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung*, no. 80 (1860): 959. On Edward, see Lionel Alexander Ritchie, “Daniel Edward (1815–1896) and the Free Church of Scotland Mission to the Jews in Central Europe,” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 21, no. 2 (2002): 173–87.

63 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (November 1, 1860): 668.

64 “Eighteenth Annual Report of the Assembly’s Jewish Mission (Belfast, July 1860),” *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (August 1, 1860): 587.

September of the same year.⁶⁵ On July 13, 1862, the gas-lit new building in King's Street, built according to the specifications of John Corry Esq. of Belfast, was opened for worship; all six hundred seats were filled.⁶⁶

Craig resigned his connection with the mission in August 1873 and left his station in Hamburg in 1874.⁶⁷ Rev. John C. Moore, for a time a colleague of Craig's in Hamburg, summarized the impact of the mission church funded in large part by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland:

When some future historian of Christ's Church in Germany gives to the world a picture of the Christian life and Christian activity of this country, that chapter will not be the least interesting one which tells the story of the establishment of your Mission to the Jews in Hamburg—of the self-denying, devoted and successful labours of Dr. Craig—and how the little band of Christians which he gathered round him in the course of years became shining lights in a dark age, and the honoured agents of God's Providence in creating a revival of religion and helping onward by a mighty stride the cause of Christ in their native land.⁶⁸

Craig's Departure

The work of the mission station in Hamburg seems to have been "very imperfectly understood" by some members of the Mission Board.⁶⁹ "The Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Assembly's Jewish Mission" refers to the "obstinacy" of an unnamed individual who, according to Craig and Moore, had done the Mission great harm by refusing to pass on the financial gift of a lady in the north of Ireland to the mission team.⁷⁰ It is probably also true to say that with time Craig's attention became more focused on reviving churches with evangelical truth and evangelizing among nominal Lutherans in the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Craig's rather fiery character and straight talking did not help to assuage the critics of this shift in emphasis.⁷¹ Even as a boy, Craig was headstrong and self-willed,⁷² and Robert Allen suggests these character traits played a significant role in the breakdown of the relationship with the Mission Board in Belfast. The death of Rev. David Hamilton (York Street, Belfast) in January 1860 was a major

65 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (August 1, 1862): 125.

66 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (December 1, 1862): 213f. The report contains a detailed description of the building.

67 Craig's salary and house rent seem to have been paid until May 1, 1874 ("Thirty-Second Annual Report of the Assembly's Jewish Mission [Belfast, June 1874]," *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* [July–August 1874]: 376, 431).

68 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (December 1, 1868): 236.

69 "Letter from Craig in February 1860," *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (March 1, 1860): 500.

70 "Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Assembly's Jewish Mission," *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (July–August 1869): 348.

71 For a reference to such criticism see *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1, 1870): 51.

72 Craig, 8.



blow for Craig.⁷³ While he was not particularly amenable to discipline, his line manager, the authoritarian Professor John Rogers, was not particularly supportive of Craig's evangelistic work.⁷⁴ Poor management of the missionary work in Hamburg fostered suspicions and irritation.⁷⁵ Craig's daughter was particularly critical of the cold-shouldering of her father by the Mission Board and by the convener in particular. "The work of a lifetime," she writes, "was crushed by the malicious efforts of two or three men who should have made themselves acquainted with the facts of the case." He was apparently told that he had been "summarily dismissed" as the Assembly's missionary on hearing of the interest of the Religious Tract Society in employing him. The Board's replacement was, Jane Craig says, thrust upon the congregation in Hamburg against its will.⁷⁶ Four-fifths of the members left to set up their own new fellowship in a hired hall. The remnant survived as the so-called Jerusalem Church, which operates to this day, though its future is most uncertain, not least due to the rejection of all missions to Jews by the North Elbian and other provincial churches in Germany.

Irish Presbyterianism and Jewish Mission Today

The Free Church of Scotland Jewish Mission convener Alexander Moody-Stuart visited the church the year the new building was opened and *The Free Church Record* reported on what he saw. "The people were neither what we would call numerous nor wealthy," he said. "These constitute a living Church—an Evangelical Church as they call themselves—in the midst of infidelity, rationalism, and superstition." It was a noble thing, Moody-Stuart believed, to have such a church, though it be mainly made up of Gentiles, "praying for the peace of Jerusalem" and standing together as watchmen on the walls of Zion. Such a church seemed to him and others "to indicate that the Lord's time to favour Zion has not yet fully come"—and yet that time was surely coming, and coming quickly.⁷⁷ If the scoffing, unbelieving world and a Sabbath-neglecting and corrupt church were signs of the times of the Gentiles coming to an end, then the zeal for the Jewish people and prayers for their conversion were heralds of the day when "all Israel will be saved," bringing resurrection life to a dying world. Their partial blindness would soon be healed. As *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* stated in April 1863: "Their night of sorrow, therefore, is not to last for ever. The day of their redemption draweth nigh."⁷⁸ Just as the preservation of the Jewish people during forty centuries of persecution had been a miracle, so their national conversion and restoration to the land prom-

73 Ibid., 180f.

74 Concerning John Rogers, see Robert Allen, *The Presbyterian College Belfast 1853–1953* (Belfast: William Mullan and Son, 1954), 175–77, 324.

75 Allen, *Arnold Frank of Hamburg*, 40f.

76 Craig, 256–58.

77 *The Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record*, n.s. no. 3 (October 1, 1862): 60.

78 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1, 1863): 49.

ised to their forefathers would, as prophecy indicated, be “the crowning miracle of the world.”⁷⁹

When, in 1870, Craig celebrated the first jubilee of the opening of the mission, there was a small number of converts pleading the cause of Israel, but the vast majority of those converted through the agencies of the Hamburg mission had either already died or had moved to some other city or country.⁸⁰ There was little to show for twenty-five years of committed service. The meager results of work among Jews was no doubt one of the factors leading to a loss of interest and support. Men like Craig, nevertheless, were convinced that the conversion of the Jews and the promise of brighter days for the Christian church were closely connected and that this conviction was gaining increasing numbers of adherents even as his time in Hamburg was coming to an end.⁸¹ He, at least, held on to this blessed hope.⁸²

But how many Irish Presbyterians in 2009 are nourished by this hope and are expecting the Jewish nation’s conversion? Today, a time in which the appalling failure of the Christian church to provoke Jews to jealousy and emulation has become clear to all, few Irish Presbyterians are involved in working toward that goal. The denomination’s Jewish Mission committee was turned into a Church and Israel Committee, and the latter was rationalized away during a restructuring operation in the 1990s. Theologically, Irish Presbyterians are closer to mainstream evangelical opinion on the importance of missions to the Jews; little is being done today, however, to put those beliefs into practice. The Irish Presbyterian Church has followed the lead of the Church of Scotland.

Scotland, the source of much of the inspiration for Irish involvement in missions among Jews, is apparently the only country in Europe where Jews have not been persecuted.⁸³ From 1960, the Church of Scotland slowly turned its back on its own theological past and, like many other churches, has surrendered its vision of bringing the gospel “to the Jew first.” David

79 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1, 1864): 273–74. See also John Rogers, “Restoration and Redemption of the Jews,” *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (March 1875): 547–49; John Rogers, “Jewish Mission,” *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1874): 309–10.

80 “Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Assembly’s Jewish Mission (Dublin, June 1871),” *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (July–August 1871): 358. The names of some converts have been preserved: a man named Lilienfeld, Samuel Oppenheimer, Rosa Heldener, Hermann Löwenthal, Moses Chapkowski, the former rabbi Samuel Küttner, Valentine Samuel Haurowitz, and the Russian Jewess Ellen Dellevie. See *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (January 1847): 402; (February 1847): 408; (April 1847): 426f; (November 1847): 502f; (August 1848): 581, 583; (February 1849): 635; (October 1849): 726; (August 1850): 825–26; (October 1850): 856; (May 1851): 911; (June 1851): 918; (August 1851): 943f; (November 1854): 2244; (May 1855): 2288; (August 1, 1855): 3022. No names of converts from Craig’s last two decades of service could be found.

81 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (December 1, 1871): 496. See also Rev. John C. Moore’s critique of the pessimism surrounding Jewish missions, *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1, 1872): 557–59.

82 See his letter in *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (March 1, 1873): 37.

83 George A. F. Knight, *For Christians Only: About Jews* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, n.d.), 12; David W. Torrance and George Taylor, *Israel, God’s Servant: God’s Key to the Redemption of the World* (Edinburgh-London: Handsel Press, 2007), 7f.



Torrance, a retired Church of Scotland minister, has argued that the whole missionary enterprise has suffered as a direct consequence of such decision-making. Just as the revival of spiritual life within that denomination was once linked to the project of taking a practical interest in the lives of Jewish people and sharing one's faith with them, so the loss of missionary zeal and evangelical enthusiasm may be connected with the cooling of hearts for the covenant people of Israel.

Many church leaders, for a variety of reasons, have either lost sight of, or have deliberately rejected, the biblical basis of such a mission. The views that the Scottish fathers of the mission held, particularly those on prophecy and eschatology, have been lost, it seems. The Jewish Christian Steve Maltz believes that much of the contemporary church has become deluded on this point. Church leaders have shied away from evangelizing Jews—an attitude he and other Jewish Christians have labeled “a subtle form of anti-Semitism.” He adds that Jews are being denied eternal life “at the altar of political correctness.”⁸⁴

The continuing biblical mandate to bring the gospel to Jewish people is clear and unchangeable. The Twentieth Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America condemned as erroneous “the false teaching held by some that salvation for Jews today is possible apart from the Gospel of Christ due to the Abrahamic Covenant, for this heresy necessarily involves denying the completed atonement for sin accomplished through our Messiah (Heb 9:15).”⁸⁵ This view was shared by a former editor of *The Missionary Herald*. In April 1863, he wrote that the church could not, “without incurring aggravated guilt, neglect to preach ‘Christ and Him crucified,’ to the Jews. To the latter we are under many special obligations. Who can consider the blessings which we receive through them, and not be sensible that their claim on us far surpasses that of any other people?”⁸⁶ A study of the life and work of James Craig, missionary to German Jews, can help us rediscover the Great Commission—and the priority of bringing the gospel to the Jew first.

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84 Steve Maltz, *How the Church Lost the Way: And How It Can Find It Again* (Ilford: Saffron Planet, 2009), 169f. Alan Stracey, the late Northern Ireland representative of the Church's Ministry among Jewish People, made a similar statement during a seminar at New Horizon, Coleraine, in 1999.

85 “PCA Resolution on Jewish Ministry,” Chaim, <http://www.chaim.org/ga.htm> (accessed January 5, 2011).

86 *The Missionary Herald . . . Ireland* (April 1, 1863): 49f.

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