

The Evil of Replacement Theology

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I. Introduction

I was raised in a militantly Amillennial church. By that I mean that you could be disfellowshipped from the church for having any other prophetic viewpoint.

We seldom ever heard any preaching about end time Bible prophecy. The classic sermon within our denomination was one that boldly stated, “There is not one verse in the Bible that even implies that Jesus will ever put His feet on this earth again!”

A Shocking Discovery

So, you can imagine how shocked I was at age 12 when I was thumbing through the Bible and discovered Zechariah 14. It was very simple to understand. It said that the Messiah would return to the Mount of Olives, that the mount would split in half when His feet touched it, that He would speak a supernatural word that would destroy all the armies around Jerusalem, and that on that day He would become “king over all the earth.”

I had always been taught that the Bible meant what it said, so I found this passage to be very confusing, since my pastor had taught that Jesus was never returning to this earth. So, I decided to confront my pastor with it, and I did so in fear and trembling.

I’ll never forget that encounter. I reminded him of what he had been teaching, and then I asked him to tell me the meaning of Zechariah 14:1-9. He pulled out his Bible and read the passage and then seemed to sit there and study it quietly for an eternity. Finally, he looked up, pointed his finger in my face, and said, “Son, I don’t know what this passage means, but I can guarantee you one thing — it doesn’t mean what it says!”

Well, that was hard for me to swallow. Again, I had been taught that the Bible meant what it said. And being a stubborn Irishman, I decided to seek other opinions. One preacher explained to me that all Old Testament prophecies had been fulfilled. “I have no idea when or where this prophecy was fulfilled,” he said, “but I can guarantee you one thing, it has been fulfilled, because all the prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus.”

When I was about 18 years old, a preacher came to town who was a graduate of a seminary. He repeated the same old claim about there not being a single verse in the Bible that implies that Jesus will ever put His feet on this earth again. After his sermon, I confronted him with Zechariah 14. He didn’t even blink. He knew the passage by heart. He just blurted out, “Apocalyptic!” I had no idea what he was talking about. I didn’t know if that was a theory or a disease. But he was a seminary graduate, so I accepted his explanation.

When I started preaching in my early 20s, I would confidently proclaim that Jesus was never going to put His foot on this earth again. Once, a little old lady in tennis shoes came up to me afterwards and asked, “What about Zechariah 14?” I snapped, “Apocalyptic!” It scared her to death, and she turned and ran. I didn’t know what I was talking about, and neither did she.

I didn’t realize it at the time, but I had been introduced to the allegorical interpretation of Scripture. The official position of my church was that everything in the Bible means exactly what it says unless it is talking about the Second Coming of Jesus, in which case it never means what it

says!

Discovery of Replacement Theology and Deliverance From It

I was also introduced to Replacement Theology, although no one in our denomination really knew what that was. You will find it hard to believe how I was confronted with this unbiblical concept. I was taught that it was sinful to pray the Lord's prayer! When I asked why, I was told, "The Lord's prayer is irrelevant to modern day Christians because it has already been answered. The prayer makes the plea, 'Thy kingdom come,' and the kingdom has already come in the form of the Church."

Another way in which I was subjected to the attitude of Replacement Theology was through the teaching that all of the Old Testament had been nailed to the Cross and was therefore irrelevant to Christianity. We called ourselves "A New Testament Church," and when the minister told us to be sure and bring our Bibles to church, we knew he meant our New Testaments. Many of us did not even own a complete Bible.

The beginning of my liberation from these viewpoints occurred when I was about 30 years old. I started reading the Minor Prophets, and I was captivated by them. Their messages seemed so relevant to modern day problems. And, once again, it was the book of Zechariah that proved to be my turning point. After reading it through from start to finish for the first time in my life, I was impacted by the fact that it is full of Messianic prophecies about the First Coming, and that every one of them meant what they said. It suddenly dawned on me that if the First Coming prophecies in this "apocalyptic" book meant what they said, then the Second Coming prophecies must mean what they say.

My study of Bible prophecy since that time has convinced me that the twisting of scriptures through spiritualization is a terrible abuse of God's Word. It has led Christians to reject the Genesis account of creation as well as the promises of God for the future.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible we need to interpret God's Word for its plain sense meaning. The failure to do so will produce tragic doctrines like Replacement Theology.

II. The Root of the Problem

I'd like to get into the topic of Replacement Theology by going to the root of it. And that is Satan's hatred of the Jewish people. Satan hates the Jews with a passion for several reasons:

- 1) God chose them to be His witness to the world.
- 2) Through them God gave the world the Bible.
- 3) Through them God gave the world the Messiah.
- 4) God has promised that He will save a great remnant of them.
- 5) God has promised that thru that remnant He will bless all the nations of the world during the Millennial reign of Jesus.

Satan is determined to destroy every Jew on planet earth so that God cannot keep His promises to them.

III. Supersessionism

Part of Satan's strategy has been to infect the Church with what was historically called Supersessionism. This is the idea that God has replaced the Jews with the Church. It's only in the 20th Century that this concept came to be known as Replacement Theology.

There are two basic kinds of Supersessionism. The first type is called "Economic Supersessionism." I prefer to call it "Historical Supersessionism." This is the more moderate form of the theology. It argues that it was God's plan from the beginning for Israel's role as the people of God to expire with the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the Church. Or, to put it another way, it was God's plan for the people of God to morph from an ethnic group into a universal group.¹

An example of this viewpoint among the early Church Fathers can be found in the writings of Melito of Sardis (died c. 180). He wrote:³

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 [Israel] was made void when the church arose.

A modern representative of this school of thought is Karl Barth. He stated:³

The first Israel, constituted on the basis of physical descent from Abraham, has fulfilled its mission now that the Savior of the world has sprung from it and its Messiah has appeared. Its members can only accept this fact with gratitude, and in confirmation of their own deepest election and calling, attach themselves to the people of this Savior, their own King, whose members the Gentiles are now called to be as well. Its [Israel's] mission as a natural community has now run its course and cannot be continued or repeated.

The far more common type of Supersessionism, and the type that has characterized the Church almost from its beginning, is called Punitive Supersessionism. It emphasizes Israel's disobedience to God and their subsequent justifiable punishment by God and their displacement as the people of God.

To put it another way, "The Chosen People of Israel have been replaced by the Church because the nation acted wickedly and has forfeited the right to be the people of God."⁴

Anti-Semitism

It is this viewpoint that early on caused the Church to be infected with a virulent form of anti-Semitism. You see, for almost 2,000 years the Church at large, both Catholic and Protestant, has maintained that due to the fact that the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, God poured out His wrath on them in 70 AD, destroying their nation and their Temple, and in the process, *He washed His hands of them*, leaving them with no purpose whatsoever as a nation.

In short, because of their continuing disobedience and their rejection of Jesus, God has replaced Israel with the Church, transferring the blessings promised to Israel to the Church.

Today this is called Replacement Theology, and those who still believe in it — the majority of professing Christians — consider modern day Israel to be an accident of history, with no spiritual significance whatsoever. Accordingly, they would deny that God has any special plans for the Jewish people in the end times. Again, to them, the regathering of the Jews and the re-establishment of Israel are simply accidents of history, with no spiritual significance.

Let me give you a graphic example of what I am talking about. Consider the following statement that was made by one of Christendom’s best known spokesmen:

I think it is problematic to relate prophecy to current events unfolding in the nation-state of Israel. There may be some relationship, of course. *Only God knows*. But the secular state of Israel created in 1948 is not, in my understanding, identical with the Jewish people as God’s chosen and called-out covenant people.

I strongly support Israel because it is a haven for persecuted Jews — not because I think it fulfills biblical prophecy. I also support a Palestinian state both from historical and prudential considerations. Given the state of affairs in the Middle East, a Palestinian state is the only practicable solution for peace.

And who wrote these words? Chuck Colson!

IV. The Roots of Replacement Theology

As I said before, the roots of Replacement Theology and its fruit of Anti-Semitism go back to the very beginning of Christianity.

As I’m sure all of you are well aware, the Church began as a Jewish institution. It was founded in Judea by Jews who were followers of a Jewish Messiah, and all its founding documents were written by Jews.

A Jewish-Christian Symbol

The Jewish nature of the early church is attested to by this symbol. It is the oldest Christian symbol that has ever been found. It is carved into artifacts found in Jerusalem that date back to the First Century.

As you can see, it shows the fish, the symbol of the Church, emerging from Jewish roots, represented by the Menorah and the Star of David. The fish became a symbol for Christians because the word for fish in Greek is ICTHUS — an acronym for Jesus Christ, God’s Son and Savior.



The Gentilization of the Church

Now, as the Church began to spread beyond its Judean origin, and as it embraced more and more Gentiles, it quickly lost touch with its Jewish roots. This process was accelerated by the destruction of the mother church in Jerusalem during the Second Jewish Revolt against the Romans that ended in 136 AD.

Another key to the Gentilizing of the Church was the development of an allegorical hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures that enabled the Church to appropriate Israel’s promises for

itself. Thus Tertullian, writing in the 3rd Century, was able to argue that the promise of Genesis 25:21-25 that ‘the older will serve the younger’ (speaking, of course of Ishmael and Isaac), was really a prophecy that Israel would become subservient to the Church!⁵

V. The Evolution of Replacement Theology and Anti-Semitism

As a result of these historical developments, Christian apologists, starting as early as the Second Century, began to turn against the Jews, characterizing them as “Christ Killers.” Consider the following examples:

The Epistle of Barnabas (100 AD) — This writing was a contender for inclusion in the Bible. It is a good demonstration of how profoundly Greek methods of interpretation had already impacted Christians. The writer insisted that the Old Testament was never meant to be read literally, but was to be interpreted allegorically.

The writer argued that “only the Christian could make sense of the Bible.” The “carnal Jews,” with their “earthly mind-set,” had failed to recognize the hidden message of their own Scriptures, and as a result, had eternally forfeited their entitlement to the covenant promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.⁶

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 50-117) — He said that “those who partake of the Passover are partakers with those who killed Jesus.”⁷

Justin Martyr (100-165) — He claimed God’s covenant with Israel was no longer valid and that the Gentiles had replaced the Jews.⁸ Additionally, he was the first to identify the Church as “the true spiritual Israel.”⁹ And he declared that the plight of the Jews — their exile and persecution — had happened “in fairness and justice” because they had “slain the Just One.”¹⁰

Melito of Sardis (died c. 180) — Also focused on deicide when he proclaimed, “The King of Israel slain with Israel’s right hand! Alas for the new wickedness of the new murder.”¹¹

Irenaeus (130-202) — He was a student of Polycarp who, in turn, was a disciple of the Apostle John. He declared that “the house of Jacob and the people of Israel are disinherited from the grace of God.” And he argued this because they “have rejected the Son of God “ and “they slew Him.”¹²

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 - c. 215) — Claimed that Israel “denied the Lord” and thus “forfeited the place of the true Israel.”¹³

Hippolytus of Rome (170-235) — He is considered by many to be the most important theologian of the 3rd Century. He was a student of Irenaeus. He declared that the Jews had been darkened in the eyes of their souls “with a darkness utter and everlasting.” He further stated that they were destined to be “slaves to the nations, not for four hundred years as in Egypt, nor seventy as in Babylon, but . . . always.”¹⁴

Tertullian of Carthage (155-230) — He blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus and argued they had been rejected by God.¹⁵

Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200-258) — He was a student of Tertullian. He wrote:

I have endeavored to show that the Jews . . . departed from God and lost God's favor . . . while the Christians succeeded to their place, deserving well of the Lord by faith, and coming out of all nations and from the whole world.¹⁶

He added:

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.¹⁷

Origen of Alexandria (185-254) — He was responsible for much Anti-Semitism, all of which was based on his assertion that the Jews were responsible for killing Jesus. In one of his treatises he wrote:¹⁸

We say with confidence that they [the Jews] will never be restored to their former condition. For they committed a crime of the most unhallowed kind, in conspiring against the Savior of the human race . . . It accordingly behoved that city where Jesus underwent these sufferings to perish utterly, and the Jewish nation to be overthrown, and the invitation of happiness offered them by God to pass to others — the Christians . . .

The Council of Elvira (305) — This was an ecclesiastical synod of Spanish clerics that was held in what is now known as the city of Granada, located in southern Spain. The council voted to prohibit Christians from sharing a meal with a Jew, marrying a Jew, blessing a Jew or observing the Sabbath.¹⁹

VI. The Turning Point for Christianity

We come now to a great turning point in the history of Christianity — namely, Constantine's conversion to Christianity in 306 AD and his ultimate adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire in 321 AD.

As we have seen, by the beginning of the 4th Century, Replacement Theology and its virulent anti-Semitism had become entrenched in Christian thought. And when Christianity was given the approval of the Empire overnight, the emperors began to enact into law the concepts and claims of the Christian theologians against the Jews and Judaism.²⁰

In the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, favor was granted to Christianity while synagogues were outlawed. Another edict, issued in 315 AD, authorized the burning of Jews if they were convicted of breaking the laws.²¹

As the Church became increasingly dominant, further laws were passed that severely curtailed rabbinical jurisdiction, prohibited conversion to Judaism, and excluded Jews from holding high office or serving in the military.²² As Clarence Wagner has summed it up, "Instead of the Church taking this opportunity to spread its Gospel message in love, it truly became the Church Triumphant, ready to vanquish its foes."²³

The Council of Nicea (325) — The first ecumenical council of the Church. It was held in what is modern day Turkey, and it was convened and presided over by Emperor Constantine. This is the historic Council that settled the Christological issue of the nature of the Son of God and his relationship to God the Father. Regarding the Jews, the Council changed the celebration of the Resurrection from the Jewish Feast of First Fruits to Easter in an attempt to disassociate it from

Jewish feasts. The Council stated:

For it is unbecoming beyond measure that on this holiest of festivals we should follow the customs of the Jews. Henceforth let us have nothing in common with this odious people . . .²⁴

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265-339) — He taught that the promises of Scripture were meant for the Gentiles and the curses were for the Jews. He asserted that the Church was the “true Israel.”

Hilary of Poitiers (c. 300 – c. 368) — This French bishop was granted sainthood by the Church. He wrote, “Jews are a perverse people accursed by God forever.”²⁶

John Chrysostom (349-407) — He was the Archbishop of Constantinople. He was nicknamed “The Golden Tongue” for his powerful preaching. He presented eight sermons against the Jews. Here is some of what he had to say:²⁷

The synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater, it is also a den of robbers and a lodging place for wild beasts . . . Jews are inveterate murderers possessed by the Devil. Their debauchery and drunkenness gives them the manners of a pig . . . This is why I hate the Jews.

He proceeded to deny that Jews could ever receive forgiveness. He claimed it was a Christian duty to hate Jews. And he claimed that Jews worshiped Satan.

And this man was canonized as a Saint!

Saint Jerome (347-420) — The renowned translator of the Bible into Latin. He described the Jews as “. . . serpents, wearing the image of Judas. Their psalms and prayers are the braying of donkeys . . . They are incapable of understanding Scripture.”²⁸

Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (c. 340-397) — He is the one who converted Saint Augustine. Regarding the Jews, he wrote:²⁹

The Jews are the most worthless of all men. They are lecherous, greedy, rapacious. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. They worship the Devil. Their religion is a sickness. The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ, and for killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon. Christians may never cease vengeance, and the Jew must live in servitude forever. God always hated the Jews. It is essential that all Christians hate them.

Saint Augustine (354-430) — He is considered the greatest of all the Church Fathers in terms of the overall impact of his theology on the Church. With regard to the Jews, he simply endorsed what had been written before him.

His only new contribution was his answer to a the frequently asked question, “Why has God allowed the Jews to continue to exist?” His answer was that although the Jews deserve death, they are destined to wander the earth to witness the victory of the Church over the Synagogue.³⁰

But in terms of Replacement Theology, he provided another cornerstone with his development of Amillennialism and his contention that the millennial kingdom had begun with the coming of

Jesus and that the Roman Church was the fulfillment of the kingdom promises that were made to Israel.

VII. The Middle Ages (5th to 15th Centuries)

So, by the mid-5th Century, Replacement theology and Amillennialism had become entrenched as doctrines of the Church, and the Jews had been demonized, condemned, and ostracized to the point that the Church had become a Gentile organization that was off-limits to the very people who founded it!

These views were reinforced by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who was the most important medieval Catholic philosopher. He argued that because of their sin of deicide, they were destined to “perpetual slavery.”³¹ He further argued that:

- 1) Jews should be compelled to work rather than live in idleness and grow rich by usury.
- 2) Jews should be forced to wear a distinctive badge in order to distinguish them from Christians.
- 3) Jews and heretics could be legitimately killed after a second warning.

To illustrate how severe the rejection of Jews had become by the Middle Ages, consider the oath that the Church in Constantinople required a Jew to take in order to become a Christian.³²

I renounce all customs, rites, legalisms, unleavened breads and sacrifice of lambs of the Hebrews, and all other feasts of the Hebrews, sacrifices, prayers, aspersions, purifications, sanctifications, and propitiations, and fasts, and new moons, and Sabbaths, and superstitions, and hymns and chants and observances and synagogues, and the food and drink of the Hebrews;

In one word, I renounce absolutely everything Jewish, every law, rite and custom . . . And if afterwards I shall wish to deny and return to Jewish superstition, or shall be found eating with Jews . . . then let the trembling Cain and the leprosy of Gehazi cleave to me . . . and may I be anathema in the world to come, and may my soul be set down with Satan and the devils.

A similar Visigoth oath from the 7th century required a Jewish covert to “renounce every rite and observance of the Jewish religion” and contained a promise that the person would “never return to the vomit of Jewish superstition.”³³

Again, by the beginning of the Middle Ages in the 5th Century, two erroneous concepts about the Jews had become firmly established in Church doctrine:

- 1) The Jews should be considered “Christ Killers” and should be mistreated accordingly.
- 2) The Church has replaced Israel, and God has no future purpose for the Jews.

These concepts were reinforced throughout the Middle Ages by:

- 1) The Crusades
- 2) Artistic Expressions
- 3) Blood libels

- 4) Black Plague myths
- 5) Distinguishing marks
- 6) Relegation to ghettos
- 7) Pogroms
- 8) The Inquisition

Let me comment briefly on each of these.

Crusades — Regarding the Crusades (11th - 13th Centuries), although their major purpose was to free the Holy Land of its Muslim rulers, the hatred of the Jews that had been instilled in the people of Europe by the Church encouraged the Crusaders to slaughter Jews along the way. Further, Pope Urban had given the Crusaders a guarantee of absolution for crimes committed in the Crusader cause. The Crusader shout, “God wills it!” soon became transmuted into “Kill a Jew and save your soul!”³⁴

The atrocities committed in the name of Jesus were beyond imagination. For example, after the Crusaders captured Jerusalem on July 15, 1099, Jews were herded into their synagogues, exits were blocked, and the synagogues were surrounded by soldiers who sang “Fairest Lord Jesus” while they burned the buildings to the ground.³⁵

Artistic Expressions — Since the literacy rate in the Middle Ages was probably only around 25%, the most important mode of communication to the common people was through various forms of art. These took the form of dehumanized portrayals of Jews in paintings, picture books, picture Bibles, sculptures, and dramas.³⁶

One of the most vivid, abominable and obscene pictures was one called “The Jewish Sow.” It appeared throughout Europe in the Middle Ages in many different forms. It depicted Jews nursing on pigs and eating their excrement. This horrid scene was painted on church walls, featured in stained glass windows and portrayed in statuary.³⁷

A more sophisticated portrayal of Replacement Theology was to be found in a very popular image called “Ecclesia versus Synagoga,” or the Church versus the Synagogue.³⁸ It personified the Church and the Synagogue as rival queens. The Jewish queen was shown blindfolded, bareheaded and downcast. In one hand she holds a broken staff. In the other she clutches the tablets of the law which are about to slip from her hand. The Church queen is depicted as triumphant, wearing a crown, with a cross in one hand and a chalice in the other. These statues were often found at the portals of cathedrals. They clearly communicated the idea that the Jews had been cast aside to make way for a new people of God.

Another type of artistic expression that was very popular was the drama. Miracle plays and passion plays abounded during the Middle Ages, and they were used to cultivate hatred toward the Jewish people. Jews were depicted as demons who knew full well that Christ was the Son of God. In each play, as Christ carried the cross, he was tortured by bloodthirsty, cursing devils with hooked noses, horns and tails. The Jews were made to seem as evil as Christ was divine.³⁹

Bible story books and picture Bibles, like the Holkham Bible produced in London in the 14th Century always portrayed the Jews as evil agents of the Devil.⁴⁰

Blood Libels — Throughout the Middle Ages, professing Christians spread myths which helped to heighten popular hatred and fear of the Jewish people. As a result, it became commonplace among

Christian groups to think of Jews as agents of Satan. One of the most popular anti-Jewish myths that gained widespread acceptance was the notion that Jews murdered Christians each year around the time of Passover in order to get blood needed to perform satanic rites. This became known as the charge of ritual murder or “blood libel.” Another common myth that circulated during these years was that Jews would steal the wafers used in communion and stab them with knives, thus killing Christ once again!⁴¹

The most notorious blood libel of the Middle Ages occurred in 1493 when a two year old boy named Simon disappeared in Trento, Italy. His father blamed the Jewish community and 15 Jews were charged with ritual murder and burned at the stake.⁴² This emotional story spread quickly throughout Europe and inspired many charges of ritual murder against Jews.

Black Plague Myths — The Black Plague in the middle of the fourteenth century killed approximately one-third of the population of Europe. At the time, it was not known how the illness spread, but stories and rumors circulated that Jews had poisoned the wells. Although the accusation was totally unfounded, many Christians believed the myth. One reason it was easy to believe is because the Jews were not impacted by the plague as much as were the Gentiles. But this was due to the sanitary laws of the Bible which the Jews carefully followed. This accusation led to severe consequences for Jews. More than sixty Jewish communities were burned to the ground with all their occupants killed, and in some places, Jews were tortured and burned to death in bonfires.⁴³

Distinguishing Marks — The Fourth Lateran Council headed by Pope Innocent III ruled in 1215 that Jews must wear distinguishable dress and a colored badge of identification.⁴⁴ This became common practice throughout Europe.

Relegation to Ghettos — In the 11th Century large cities throughout Europe began to herd Jews into designated areas within the cities called ghettos. This action was motivated, of course, by hatred of the Jews. Considering them to be “vermin,” it was decided that they should be cut off from the rest of the population.⁴⁵

Pogroms — Massive violent attacks against Jewish communities broke out in the 11th and 12th Centuries in France, Germany and England. The Black Plague in the 14th Century provoked additional pogroms throughout Europe. During these pogroms, Jews were murdered, synagogues were destroyed and Torah scrolls were burned.⁴⁶

The Inquisition — It started in 12th Century France and persisted into the 14th Century. It was originally launched to counter heresy within the Catholic Church, but in 1242 it veered off course by condemning the Talmud, resulting in the burning thousands of Jewish books. In 1288, the Inquisition produced the first mass burning of Jews at the stake in France.⁴⁷

VIII. The Impact of the Reformation

Unfortunately, the Reformation produced no changes in attitudes toward the Jews. Replacement Theology is contained throughout the reference notes of the Geneva Bible, published in 1557, and it is reflected in the chapter headings of the King James Bible, published in 1611.⁴⁸ For example, in Isaiah 43 God addresses His promises to “O Jacob” and “O Israel,” but the King James chapter heading reads: “God comforteth the Church with His promises.”

Actually, the Reformation seemed to get off to a good start regarding attitudes toward the Jews. That’s because Martin Luther interjected a breath of fresh air when he took a firm stand against the

Church's mistreatment of the Jewish people. In a treatise he wrote in 1523 entitled, "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew," he surveyed medieval anti-Semitism and proclaimed: "If I had been a Jew and had seen such dolts and blockheads govern and teach the Christian faith, I would sooner have become a hog than a Christian." He sincerely believed that the Jewish people would convert en masse to Christianity once they were presented with a Gospel that was free of "papal paganism."⁴⁹ He concluded his treatise with these words:⁵⁰

Therefore, I would request and advise that one deal gently with them and instruct them from Scripture; then some of them may come along. Instead of this we are trying only to drive them by force, slandering them . . . So long as we thus treat them like dogs, how can we expect to work any good among them? Again, when we forbid them to labor and do business and have any human fellowship with us, thereby forcing them into usury, how is that supposed to do them any good? If we really want to help them, we must be guided in our dealings with them not by papal law but by the law of Christian love . . . If some of them should prove stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we ourselves are not all good Christians either.

Unfortunately this biblical attitude did not last long. Luther became disillusioned and irritated with the Jews when they continued to resist his reformed Gospel. In 1526 he complained of the Jews' stubbornness, and by the 1530s he was endorsing the common medieval stereotypes of the Jews, referring to them as "iron-hearted" and "stubborn as the Devil."⁵¹

By the end of his life, Luther had turned against the Jews with a vengeance. In 1543 he wrote a pamphlet entitled "Concerning the Jews and Their Lies."⁵² The document was an anti-Semitic diatribe that served to summarize the Jewish hatred that had been accumulating for the past thousand years. In it, he referred to the Jews as:

"A miserable and accursed people"
"Stupid fools"
"Miserable, blind and senseless"
"Thieves and robbers"
"The great vermin of humanity"
"Lazy rogues"
"Blind and venomous"

Having dehumanized and demonized them, Luther then proceeded to make some startling proposals for dealing with them:

- 1) Their synagogues and schools be burned.
- 2) Their houses should be destroyed.
- 3) Their Talmudic writings should be confiscated.
- 4) Their Rabbis should be forbidden to teach.
- 5) Their money should be taken from them.
- 6) They should be compelled into forced labor.

IX. The Impact on Nazism

Needless to say, the Nazis gleefully quoted Luther as they rose to power and launched the Holocaust. In fact, Hitler referred to Luther in his book, *Mein Kampf*, as a "great warrior, a true statesman, and a great reformer."⁵³

In 1924 at a Christian gathering in Berlin, Hitler spoke to thousands and received a standing ovation when he made the following proclamation: “I believe that today I am acting in accordance with the will of Almighty God as I announce the most important work that Christians could undertake — and that is to be against the Jews and get rid of them once and for all.”⁵⁴

Hitler then proceeded to talk about the influence of Luther on his life:⁵⁵

Martin Luther has been the greatest encouragement of my life. Luther was a great man. He was a giant. With one blow he heralded the coming of the new dawn and the new age. He saw clearly that the Jews need to be destroyed, and we're only beginning to see that we need to carry this work on.

At the Nuremberg trials after World War II, the Nazi leader, Julius Streicher, defended himself by saying, “I have never said anything that Martin Luther did not say.”⁵⁶

The terrible truth that Christians do not like to face, and which many are unaware of, is that the Holocaust was the product of 1,900 years of virulent Christian anti-Semitism.

X. The New Anti-Semitism

Speaking of the Holocaust, the horror of it tended to mute virulent anti-Semitism among Christian leaders after World War II. But in reality, it continues in a new form called “Anti-Zionism.”

Anti-Zionism is just anti-Semitism in new, sophisticated clothes. Whereas anti-Semitism sought to drive out the Jews from the lands where they lived, anti-Zionism refuses to accept their right to live in their own land.

Knox Seminary Document

A good example of the new form of anti-Semitism can be found in a document issued by James Kennedy’s Knox Theological Seminary in 2002. It was entitled, “An Open Letter to Evangelicals Concerning Israel.”⁵⁷ It has since been endorsed by hundreds of theologians and pastors, including such luminaries as R. C. Sproul.

The document begins by denouncing those who teach that the Bible’s promises concerning the land of Israel are being fulfilled today “in a special region or ‘Holy Land,’ perpetually set apart by God for one ethnic group alone.”⁵⁸ It then proceeds to proclaim that the promises made to Abraham “do not apply to any particular ethnic group, but to the Church of Jesus Christ, *the true Israel*” (emphasis added).⁵⁹

The document then specifically denies the Jew’s claim on any land in the Middle East by asserting: “The entitlement of any one ethnic or religious group to territory in the Middle East called the ‘Holy Land’ cannot be supported by Scripture.” Then, incredibly, the document asserts that “In fact, the land promises specific to Israel in the Old Testament were fulfilled under Joshua.”⁶⁰

Adding salt to the wounds, the document concludes with the following observation:⁶¹

The present secular state of Israel . . . is not an authentic or prophetic realization of the Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a day should not be anticipated

in which Christ's kingdom will manifest Jewish distinctives, whether by its location in 'the land,' by its constituency, or by its ceremonial institutions and practices.

Despite these statements, when the anti-Zionists are accused of being anti-Semitic, they deny the accusation vehemently. Here's how Dennis Prager, radio host and political commentator, has replied to their denials in his book, *Why the Jews?*:⁶²

The contention that anti-Zionists are not enemies of Jews, despite the advocacy of policies that would lead to the mass murder of Jews, is, to put it as generously as possible, disingenuous. If anti-Zionism realized its goal, another Jewish holocaust would take place . . . Therefore attempts to draw distinctions between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism are simply meant to fool the naive.

Christian Palestinianism

In recent years a new form of this anti-Zionism has raised its ugly head in the form of the Christian Palestinian Movement that our colleague, Paul Wilkinson, has spoken to us about several times.

James Showers, Director of The Friends of Israel, has defined the movement in the following words:⁶³

Christian Palestinianism claims modern Israel has no biblical connection with or justification for owning the Promised Land; therefore, it concludes, Israel has become an apartheid state, occupying territory belonging to the Palestinian Arabs.

The Movement's most prominent leaders over the past few years are the following:

Stephen Sizer — Anglican vicar of Christ Church in Surrey, England.

Gary Burge — Ordained Presbyterian minister and professor of New Testament at Wheaton College.

Donald E. Wagner — Ordained Presbyterian minister and director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at North Park University in Chicago, Illinois.

John Stott — The late theologian and rector emeritus of All Souls Church in London.

Hank Hanegraaff — President of the Christian Research Institute and host of the "Bible Answer Man" radio program.

Tony Campolo — Baptist minister, author, and professor emeritus of sociology at Eastern University in Pennsylvania.

Lynne Hybels — Wife of Willow Creek Church senior pastor and founder, Bill Hybels.

Naim Ateek — Founder of Sabeel, the Palestinian Ecumenical Liberation Theology center in Jerusalem.

Mitri Raheb — Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem.

Stephen Sizer is the recognized champion of the Christian Palestinian Movement. He has denounced Israel as an “apartheid state” which he claims is guilty of ethnic cleansing, and he has demonized Christians who support Israel as “heretical Armageddonites” whose interpretation of the Bible “provides a theological endorsement for racial segregation, apartheid and war.”⁶⁴

One of the movement’s greatest propaganda tools is the Kairos Palestine Document adopted in 2009. It declares “that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity . . .” And it further asserts “that any theology, seemingly based on the Bible or on faith or on history, that legitimizes the occupation, is far from Christian teachings, because it calls for violence and holy war in the name of God Almighty . . .”⁶⁵ That’s a mouthful when you consider the fact that it is Muslims, not Christians, who are calling for Holy War in the name of God.

The proponents of the movement hold Christian Zionists in open contempt. John Stott denounced Christian Zionism as “biblically anathema to the Christian faith.”⁶⁶ Hank Hanegraaff wrote, “Christian Zionist beliefs and behaviors are the antithesis of biblical Christianity.”⁶⁷

One British journalist, Alan Hart, who supports the Christian Palestinian Movement, went so far as to state on his website:⁶⁸

It’s time to give Israel’s hardcore Zionists their real name. They are the New Nazis . . . If Europeans and Americans don’t stop the New Nazis, it’s likely their endgame will be the extermination of millions of Palestinians.

And so you have it — an overview of the sad and sordid history of Christian anti-Semitism rooted in Replacement Theology and continuing to this day under the guise of anti-Zionism.

XI. The Response of Scripture

What does the Word of God have to say about all this?

Anti-Semitism — To begin with, it strongly repudiates anti-Semitism. Consider these words from Psalm 129:

- 5) May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward.
- 6) Let them be like grass upon the housetops which withers before it grows up,
- 7) with which the reaper does not fill his hand . . .
- 8) Nor do those who pass by say, “The blessing of the Lord be upon you . . .”

Deicide — With regard to the allegation that the Jews are “Christ killers,” the Word clearly identifies who murdered Jesus and makes it plain that the Jews were not exclusively responsible. You will find the identity of those responsible in Acts 4:27:

For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant, Jesus, whom You did anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.

Notice who is listed here as those responsible for the death of Jesus: Romans, Jews and Gentiles. And someone else not named — **You and Me!** Yes, all of us are responsible for the death of Jesus,

for all of us are sinners (Romans 3:23), and Jesus died for all sinners (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Land Promise — Regarding the idea that God has already fulfilled the land promises to the Jews during the time of Joshua, it is interesting to note that long after Joshua, King David wrote in Psalm 105 that the land promise is everlasting in nature and is yet to be fulfilled. The fact of the matter is that the Jews have never occupied all the land that was promised to them in the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15:18-21). Under Joshua, they were given only the land that was promised to Moses.

Rejection — Concerning the claim that the Jews have been rejected by God, there are a couple of biblical principles that need to be kept in mind. First, the Bible affirms that the Jews were called as God's Chosen People to be witnesses of what it means to have a relationship with Him (Isaiah 43:10-12). And the Bible makes it clear that this calling is "irrevocable" (Romans 11:29).

You can find the calling in Isaiah 43, beginning with verse 10:

10) "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me.

11) "I, even I, am the Lord, And there is no savior besides Me.

12) ". . . So you are My witnesses," declares the Lord . . .

The everlasting nature of this call is emphasized in Romans 11 beginning with verse 28:

28) From the standpoint of the gospel they [the Jews] are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers;

29) for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Replacement — In direct contradiction of Replacement Theology, the Bible teaches that the Jews have never been replaced with the Church by God because of their unbelief. In Romans 3 Paul asserts point blank that their rejection of Jesus has not nullified God's faithfulness to the promises He has made to them:

1) What advantage has the Jew? [The Church: "None!"]

2) Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

3) What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? [The Church: "Yes!"]

4) May it never be! Rather, let God be found true though every man be found a liar

. . .

Paul makes the same point again in Romans 11:1 where he asks: "God has not rejected His people, has He?" The Church's response for 2,000 years has been "Yes!" But Paul's response is exactly the opposite: "May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew . . ."

Discipline — It is true that the Jewish people are currently under discipline because of their rejection of their Messiah. Over and over in their Scriptures the prophets said they would be

disciplined if they were unfaithful, but always the promise was made that they would be preserved. An example of this type of prophetic statement can be found in Jeremiah 30:11 —

“For I am with you,” declares the Lord, “to save you; for I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you, only I will not destroy you completely. But I will chasten you justly, and will by no means leave you unpunished.”

Preservation — God has preserved them in His grace because He loves them. In Zechariah 2:8 God proclaims that the Jewish people are “the apple of His eye,” and He warns against anyone trying to harm them.

Salvation — Another reason they have been preserved is because God is determined to bring a great remnant to salvation (Isaiah 10:20-22). This promise is made repeatedly throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and is confirmed by Paul in the New Testament in Romans 9-11. The salvation of this remnant is described in detail in Zechariah 12:10 where it says that at the end of the Tribulation the remaining Jews will come to the end of themselves and will turn their hearts to God in repentance and accept Yeshua as their Messiah.

Primacy — That believing remnant will go into the Millennium in the flesh and will comprise the nation of Israel to whom God will fulfill all the promises He has made to the Jews (Isaiah 60-62). During the Millennium the nation of Israel will be the prime nation in the world through whom God will bless all the other nations (Zechariah 8:22-23).

In summary, the Word of God makes it clear that Israel definitely has a role and a future in the end times.

XII. The Perseverance of Anti-Semitism

There can be no doubt that a perversion of Christianity called Replacement Theology has been the source of most anti-Semitism in the Western world. Throughout northern Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia, anti-Semitism has been promoted by Islam. The Qu’ran calls Jews “the children of monkeys and pigs.”⁶⁹

But there are anti-Semites in this world who are neither Christian or Muslim and who have never even met a Jew. For example, several years ago several of the top ten best selling books in Japan were virulently anti-Semitic, blaming all the problems of Japan on an “international Jewish conspiracy.”⁷⁰

Why is anti-Semitism so widespread, so persistent, so virulent, and so irrational? It’s because, as I asserted at the beginning, it is fundamentally a supernatural phenomenon.

I want to end as I began, emphasizing that Satan hates the Jews with a passion. He hates them because God provided both the Bible and the Messiah through them. He hates them because God called them to be His Chosen People. He hates them because God has promised to save a great remnant of them. He hates them because God loves them.

The result is that he works overtime to plant seeds of hatred in people’s hearts toward the Jews. He is determined to destroy every Jew on planet earth so that God cannot keep His promise to save a great remnant. He tried to annihilate them in the Holocaust. He failed. He will try to destroy them once again during the last half of the Tribulation. He will fail again.

XIII. Conclusion

In conclusion, Replacement Theology is an abomination. It is unbiblical, and it has resulted in virulent anti-Semitism that has in turn resulted in the deaths of millions of Jews.

There is no reason for the Church to be covetous of the promises that God has made to the Jewish people. He has also made some glorious promises to the Church, one of which is the Rapture. Additionally we have been promised that we will reign with him over all the nations of the world during his Millennial kingdom. And we have been promised that we will live with Him eternally on a New Earth in a New Jerusalem in new, Glorified Bodies.

It is no wonder that Paul wrote: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor has the mind of man conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

God’s Sovereignty

One of the fundamental underlying messages of this presentation is that God is in control. He is on His throne. He is sovereign. And He has the wisdom and the power to orchestrate all the evil of Man and Satan to the triumph of His Son in history.

God has already proved this point with His response to the Cross. He took the most dastardly act in the history of Mankind and transformed it into the most glorious through the resurrection of His Son.

Satan’s Frustration

Satan has got to be the most frustrated character in all the universe. And just as he was frustrated in murdering God’s Son, He will be frustrated in murdering God’s Chosen People.

For a great remnant of the Jewish people is going to live to the end of the Tribulation. They will be brought to the end of themselves.

Israel’s Salvation

And when Jesus appears in His Second Coming,

“ . . . they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10)

They will receive Yeshua as their Messiah, and they will cry out “Baruch Habá B’Shem Adonai.” (Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!) What a glorious day that will be. What glory it will bring to the name of God.

Meanwhile, as we await that day, let us meet each new day with the cry of “Maranatha! Maranatha! Come quickly Lord Jesus!”

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