

CHRISTIANITY AND THE HEBREWS: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO ANTI-JEWISH ATTITUDES AND
BELIEFS

by

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One debate that has raged since the time of Paul is if the Jewish people are still chosen by God or if they have been rejected because of their rejection of Messiah. Often a belief in the replacement or devolvement of Israel has led to tragic consequences. Though the Jews hardly represent a fraction of the world population, they are known worldwide and have been persecuted and held influence on all habitable continents. Whether the Jews are evil *en masse* or simply an unfairly targeted group often rests upon how one views God's actions toward the Jews. When one looks at the persecution of the Jews, one must ask if it is because God is punishing them – thus the punishment is deserved – or if they are suffering an attack by Satan because they are still chosen. The debate cannot continue as to the cause of antisemitism until one looks to see if the Jews are still chosen or not.

Before we can look to see if the Jews are chosen, though, three things must be looked at. Namely that antisemitism does exist, the Jews are an ethnicity, and that any racist actions against the Jewish people or Jewish religion are simply unfounded.

Antisemitism is not a made up word

One charge that is often levied against people, who use the term “anti-Semite” is that the term is relatively new, thus was simply used to deter anyone from

criticizing the Jews lest they be labeled an anti-Semite. Though many people, Jews included, will admit that the accusatory “anti-Semite” has been thrown around too much at points, this does not negate that antisemitism exists.¹

The term “antisemitism” is relatively new, finding its origins in the mid 19th century, but this is really irrelevant as to the legitimacy of the term. Antisemitism merely refers to any actions, speech, or beliefs that degrade the Jewish people as inferior, evil, or conspiring to hurt another ethnic or religious group. Though the term is new, the concept of antisemitism has been around for nearly 4,000 years. For instance, the word “trinity” is nowhere to be found in the Bible (as the word is Latin in origin while the Bible is Greek and Hebrew in origin); the concept is found all throughout the Bible. Likewise, the term “antisemitism” was not coined until the mid 19th century in Germany, but the concept had existed for quite some time.

In fact, the term was originally meant as a positive descriptor of people who were against Jewish influences within Germany. Wilhelm Marr is probably most famous for popularizing the term when he founded *The League of Antisemites* in an effort to combat what he saw as Jewish influence within Germany. The term, since that time, has been used to refer to anyone who is against the Jews. If we believe that the word “antisemitism” is somehow illegitimate because it was formulated in the 19th century by

¹ "The Middle", "Nice Piece Of Antisemitism At The Washington Post," *Jewlicious*, January 9, 2008, www.jewlicious.com/ (accessed January 12, 2008).

pro-German nationalists, then we must also deny that genocide exists since it was coined in the 20th century. Such logic is not only baffling, but also absurd. The term was originally created by a self-avowed “anti-Jew” who was seeking out like-minded people – the negative connotations of the word are simply an accident in its etymology.

A Great Nation

When people think of “the Jews” they generally think of bearded men with strange curly sideburns and weird hats praying towards a wall – such a caricature couldn’t be further from the truth. People associate “Jew” with “Judaism” and subsequently believe that anyone who claims to be Jewish must also ascribe to Judaism. Though there are certain elements within the Orthodox (Judaism) community who teach a true Jew is a practicing Jew, genetically this simply is not the case. Jews are an ethnicity, though unique in that there is a culture and religion tied to the ethnicity. However, just as it would be inappropriate to believe all Arabs, Persians, or North Africans are Muslims, it is also inappropriate to believe that all Jews somehow practice Judaism.

From a New Testament perspective one does not need to look any further than Paul’s own words. In Romans 9:3-4 Paul states that the lost Jews are his own kinsmen. In the Greek, there is no way to mistake what Paul is stating. The Greek reads, *συγγενων μου κατα σαρκα* (*suggenon mou kata sarka*), which is a Greek idiom. The problem is most translations attempt to do a “word for word” translation, which works about 99% of the time, until an idiom is reached. The word for word might state what

the idiom is, but doesn't state what the idea is behind the idiom. In this instance, the NASB reads that the Israelites are Paul's "...kinsmen according to the flesh." In modern English it would read that they are his brothers according to his ethnicity, or blood. Thus, if the Jews are not a race, then Paul is mistaken in Romans 9 where he states that he is of their same bloodline. He would be sorely misguided then in implicating that Christ was completely Jewish in His own lineage (9:5). Therefore, either Paul is mistaken, or one must accept that the Jewish people are a race/ethnicity and not just a religion.

Further evidence is that the lineage of the Messiah is traced through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and so on. If one looks at the lineage, it is not a spiritual lineage, but a physical one. That is to say, the lineage is passed on from generation to generation according to the *bloodline* and not to the spiritual status of the person involved (for instance, Judah – who paid his daughter-in-law to have sex with him – is on the list though he lacked quite a bit spiritually). The purpose in keeping a meticulous record of the genealogy is to prove the kingship of the Messiah – if the Jews, however, were not a race, then such a genealogy would be pointless. The genealogy would only matter if there was a bloodline of descendants, and this is only possible if the Jews are an ethnicity. Thus, the bloodline is further evidence to the proof of the Jews existing as a race.²

² At this point some readers might want to object and point out that Rahab was a non-Jew, yet is in the lineage of Christ. Though this is true, it is quite an irrelevant fact. The only people who

Imago Dei

One of the central tenets of the Christian faith is that all men are made in the image of God. In fact, the very first theological statement – related to anthropology – found in the Bible deals with man being in God’s image. In Genesis 1:26-27, the author states:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

The significance of this passage is it shows that all men, regardless of race or gender, are in the image of God. A *prima facie* read of the passage shows that the image

survived the attack at Jericho were Rahab and her family. Considering she was a prostitute, we can conclude that she had to marry within the tribe of Israel (unless we would rather conclude she was a prostitute while married, even though this would have warranted her death in the Ancient Near Eastern culture, or that she married someone within her immediate family). As the years progressed and her descendents married other Jews, the “non-Jewish” DNA would eventually be assimilated into the “Jewish” DNA. An example of this is if an Anglo and an African marry, and the offspring of such a relationship marry exclusively Africans, by the 8th generation it will be impossible to tell that the African has an Anglo heritage. Throw in 20 generations and even a scientist will find great difficulty in finding any Anglo DNA. Considering there were 32 generations between Christ and Rahab, it’s difficult and ludicrous to assert that Jesus wasn’t completely Jewish because of an anomaly in His lineage.

If one were to accept the absurd theory that Jesus can’t be fully Jewish because of Rahab, then we would have to do away with any ethnic or racial boundaries. We would need to accept that we are all of one race with different shades. Though I have no problem with this belief, those who often purport that Jesus wasn’t fully Jewish often have a hard time with accepting other races. Thus, if they wish to deny the full Jewish nature of Christ, they must also be willing to admit they are Jewish, Black, and Hispanic since if their DNA is traced back far enough we will find all of those ethnicities within them.

is not contained in the *physical* nature of man – especially since God is spirit and not physical (John 4:24) – but instead is found in who man is; man’s personality, ability to love, ability to think rationally, ability to have deep emotions – these are what consist of God’s image. Being in God’s image is what makes man higher than the animals, as Michael Wittmer points out by saying, “What elevates us above the other creatures is the simple truth that we, not they, are said to bear the image of God.”³ All men are made in the image of God and are therefore equally significant.

Theologically, this is called the *imago Dei* and holds great significance on man’s relation to his fellow man. It shows that all men are on the same metaphysical level – whether a person is black, brown, white, or holds a French, German, Arabian, Jewish, or any other ethnicity, all men are truly equal in the eyes of God. Though existing in the same metaphysical realm does not necessitate equal treatment (e.g. a human and an animal are metaphysically equal, but are to be treated differently), it does necessitate that we acknowledge that all humans hold something in common.

This commonality, however, extends beyond metaphysics and into the ontology of man. All things, both spiritual and physical, exist equally within the metaphysical realm. Metaphysically, everything – with God as the only exception – has a beginning and is capable of having an end (if God so chooses). Thus, all things are created and are

³ Michael Wittmer, *Heaven is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 76.

not inherently more valuable than anything else – such value must be dictated by ontology. Ontologically, then, all men are still equal.⁴ All men, regardless of ethnicity, are capable of writing poetry, discovering philosophical truths, composing music, writing fiction, and so on. The basic ontological difference between man and nature is that man is not a machine – this is based solely on being in the image of God. As Francis Schaeffer states, “A Christian knows that this is because man has been made in the image of God and though man is fallen, separated from God by his true guilt, yet nevertheless he has not become a machine.”⁵ Therefore, man is not only unique in creation, but also inherently similar and equal to his fellow man.

In terms of ontology, the only difference that could possibly be found between humans is in terms of color, ethnicity, or language. These, however, do not disrupt the unity and equality within man’s ontology, as they add no benefit. As far as the color of a person goes, it adds no inherent advantage – the only “advantage” that could be found

⁴ Whereas metaphysics explains the broader picture and attempts to show the relationship between all things, ontology differentiates and explains what consists of each genus/species in an attempt to find being. Ontology also deals with identity, best demonstrated through Leibniz’s Law of the Indiscernible of Identicals. This law states that $(x)(y)[(x = y) \rightarrow (P)(Px \leftrightarrow Py)]$. An example of this put into practice is assuming Mark is a teacher and a father. If one can prove that Mark (P) is both a teacher (x) and a father (y), then one can assume there is an equivocation between teacher, father, and Mark. The significance in this is that if it can be proven that Jim (P) is black (x), in the image of God (y), then it would show that x is merely an equivocation point in Jim’s ontology – he would still be the same ontologically as someone who is white because they would both share the property of y.

⁵ Schaeffer, Francis, *The God Who is There: The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 67.

would be completely aesthetic and have nothing to do with who man *is*, but instead would deal with what man *looks like*. If the color can be stripped away and the person can maintain the personality he has (e.g. if one were to change the color of a white man's skin to a black man's skin, the man's personality and who he is would still be intact). Though race and ethnicity supply slight ontological differences (when taken to the extreme) they do not disrupt the argument of equality for being in God's image. The only thing that matters, in fact, is if man is truly in God's image. If man is not in God's image, regardless of his race, he is nothing. Again, according to Wittmer, "And if we are not created in his image, there really isn't anything uniquely special about us – we're just the top rung (so far) on the evolutionary scale. Therefore, since we readily abort, clone, and euthanize other animals, why not do the same with humans, who, though highly advanced, are only animals after all?"⁶

One might try to say that the Fall of man destroyed the image of God, but this wouldn't make much sense as the concept is still around post-Fall. Genesis 9:6 states that the punishment for murder is death. The reason for this punishment is, "For in the image of God He made man." James states that it is a sin to praise God and, with the same tongue, curse man, "who is made in the image of God (James 3:9)." Thus, though man is fallen, the image has not been destroyed. Even the great Reformer John Calvin believed that the image was merely tainted and not annihilated. Brian Follis, in writing

⁶ Wittmer, 76

on Calvin's view, states, "...Calvin believed that the image of God extends to everything that makes human nature distinct from the other species of animals, and while the whole image was damaged by sin, only the spiritual qualities were completely lost."⁷ Thus, the Fall damaged God's image, but did not completely destroy it – if the opposite were true and the image were completely destroyed, then man would be no higher than the animals, merely more advanced.

Is Any Ethnicity Worse than the Other?

Though it has been firmly established that all men are ontologically equal, some might try to say that because of man's sinfulness some ethnicities are worse than the others are – this, however, is an erroneous error. All men are fallen and subsequently fail to live up being image bearers of God. Again, Wittmer says, "If we look closely, we can still see the reflection of God in ourselves, but it is now distorted y the jagged edges of sin. We still bear the image of God, but it's not as crisp and clean as it once was."⁸ This is not unique to any ethnicity or worse in any ethnicity – it is true of all men. No specific race is worse than the other as the Bible states that *all* men fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). It does not matter to the level these men fall – whether it is theft, murder, or a simple lie – falling short of God's glory is the great immoral action a human

⁷ Brian Follis, *Truth With Love: The Apologetics of Francis Schaeffer* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 20.

⁸ Wittmer, 80

can commit and all humans commit it, therefore all humans are equally guilty before God.

One could point out that, in America, there are a higher number of blacks in prison than whites, or that Africa seems to be in more turmoil than European nations, or that there is a hint of lawlessness and barbarianism in the Middle East than in Mexico – but again, this would prove nothing. These actions, however, have nothing to do with the race of the people, but instead deal with the culture. It is true that some cultures are worse than others are, but this merely shows the level of depravity that man can achieve and not an inherent flaw within a race or ethnicity. For instance, though Western Civilization (traditionally European) has rid itself of barbarism, we can look and see how the supposed “white culture” was a very fallen culture (and still is today). It was the Europeans who devised slavery based upon race and instituted one of the most barbaric forms of slavery this world has ever seen. It was the Europeans who adopted Muslim practices in harming the Jews and participating in the Crusades. It was Europeans who used to sacrifice their children to pagan gods prior to Christianity and raped and pillaged Roman towns. Does this mean that all people of European ancestry are more evil than other cultures that avoided these sins? Of course not – it merely means the culture was fallen, but it had nothing to do with the ethnicity.

The final problem with saying one ethnicity is worse than the other is that the blame must be laid at God’s feet. Since all men are human, regardless of race, all men are made in the image of God. If any one race is worse than the other is then it is a flaw

in God's design. God created all these races and knew the Fall would occur – thus, if any race is worse than the other, it is by direct intervention of God. This, of course, is not a position that any Christian can possibly take, as it would mean that God created something imperfect, or less than optimal. To say that one ethnicity is worse than the other is, or causes more problems in the world than any other causes (i.e. Jews cause more problems than Non-Jewish Europeans) is the same as saying, "God made a mistake."

The Jews Are Still in God's Image

Getting back to the main point of the article, Christian hatred against the Jews is unfounded, regardless of if they're chosen or not, based on the fact that they are still in God's image. Whatever sins the individuals within an ethnicity commit we, as Christians, must make sure we never apply it to the entire ethnicity. If a Jew murders a child, we cannot turn around and say, "That is typical of the Jews." This would be an immoral error and antithetical to the Biblical principle that all men are made in the image of God. Individual sins should be judged according to the individual and laid at the individual's doorstep. The individual sins should never be place on the whole of an ethnic group. Furthermore, because Jews (as all humans) are in the image of God, they are to be treated with respect and dignity as fellow image bearers.

A further implication of actions and beliefs against the Jews is that it makes it

quite difficult to bring the Gospel to them.⁹ The call of the Gospel is to go to all people and this includes Jews. Whenever we treat anyone of any ethnicity in a disparaging manner, it makes it quite difficult to bring the Gospel to that person. An example of this is how difficult it would be for me (a white male) to bring the Gospel to a black youth. The actions of the past by people associated with my color have made it difficult for anyone of any color to trust anyone of my color. This must be sad with regret and sadness and such trust issues have permeated the Church, where race should not be an issue and such issues should be left at the foot of the Cross. However, we must not continue to repeat this mistake. As Francis Schaeffer states, regarding Christian actions toward the Jews, "We cannot seek to win them [Jews] individually to the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior if we despise them as a people in our hearts."¹⁰ Thus, if one suspects the Jews or blames them of wrong doing as a whole, then one cannot possibly hope to ever lead one Jew to Christ, much less treat them with the dignity and respect that they deserve as image bearers of God.

⁹ I must stress that I do not intend a "pragmatic kindness" towards the Jews. We should treat the Jews with kindness, dignity, and respect because they are in the image of God. We shouldn't treat them kindly just because it might open up a Gospel presentation. Regardless of how they (or any other humans) treat us or respond to the Gospel, we must treat them with respect and dignity. This goes for all races, cultures, ethnicities, and even individuals. We should never treat someone nice just because we want to share the Gospel - this is fake concern and only places the importance of the person on that person's response to the Gospel. The point of this section, however, is to show that there is a negative side effect to not treating the Jews as image bearers.

¹⁰ Francis Schaeffer, "The Fundamentalist Christian and Anti-Semitism," *The Independent Board Bulletin*, October 1943, 19.

It simply makes no sense to demand salvation from the Jewish people while implicating them in conspiracy theories or declaring them not to be chosen by God. It would be the equivalent of walking into someone's house, urinating on that person's floor, blaming the person for the soiled floor, then saying the only solution is to buy your company's floor cleaner. What Jew in his right mind would even want to listen to the Gospel story if the person sharing it harbors hatred or suspicion towards the Jewish people? One cannot be ethnocentric in his approach to the world and hope to fulfill the Great Commission; one cannot be ethnocentric in his approach to the world and hope to please God; one cannot be ethnocentric in his approach to the world and hope to truly be a Christian. It is simply illogical to harbor hatred against the Jewish people and hope that they will one day come to Christ.

The ramification of eradicating hatred toward the Jewish people is to first abandon silly conspiracy theories implicating the entirety of the Jewish race.¹¹ The simple fact is, even if some Jews abuse the power they have, seek to be in control, or desire to control the United States, this does not indict the entire ethnicity. John Wilkes Booth was part of a conspiracy to kill Abraham Lincoln; this does not mean all

¹¹ Personally I do not believe there is a group of men trying to run the world or that Jews get together annually to discuss how they'll take over the world. The government has a hard enough time getting a package from point A to point B - how could this same government create the most elaborate conspiracy theories this world has ever known? Regardless, for the sake of the article I am assuming these conspiracy theories are somewhat true and that there are some Jews involved.

Southerners were guilty of this crime. Likewise, if one Jew or even one hundred Jews are guilty of trying to bring corruption into America, this does not mean all Jews are guilty. A black man that kills a person on the street does not negate the entire black race. Just because a Mexican crosses the border illegally does not mean all Mexican immigrants are illegal. If a Jew abuses power and wealth it does not automatically mean that the entire Jewish ethnicity is to blame. A conspiracy theory against an entire race violates the principles I gave above, on how all men are equally in the image of God and equally fallen. To implicate an entire race is nothing more than blatant racism and a violation of Biblical truths. If one wishes to truly follow the Bible, one must first get rid of any conspiracy theories that implicate entire ethnicities or races.

The Jews Are Still Chosen

The cause of much anti-Semitism flows from the belief that the Jews have somehow lost their calling of God, but the New Testament – specifically Paul – addresses this issue face on and states that the Jews are still chosen. Before going further, it must be understood what “chosen” means.

The obscurity of the term “chosen” is understandable as Paul often uses it to describe those who have been elected by God to salvation. Thus, people often commit the fallacy of equivocation by assuming that because “chosen” means one thing in one sentence, it means the same thing in all sentences. This, however, does not work. For instance, if Jenny said she loved ice cream and that she loved her husband, we could not logically deduct that Jenny loves her ice cream as much as she loves her husband. The

reason is there are not enough contexts to equivocate the two usages of the word “love.” Just because the same word is used does not mean the same meaning is meant in each usage. Likewise, when one says the Jews are chosen, this does not necessarily mean, “chosen for salvation.” It can mean a variety of things when used in the Biblical context, such as chosen for a purpose, chosen for a plan, chosen for a blessing, *ad infinitum*.

Thus, we must ask ourselves, were the Jews as a whole ever called to salvation (that is, chosen to be saved regardless of their choice)? Romans 9:6-8 seems to indicate that they weren't:

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

Spiritually speaking, only those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Messiah can be the spiritual children of God. This, however, was never the calling of Israel. Israel was never called *en masse* to salvation, but merely as instruments to God's blessing of salvation. All this proves, however, is that the Jewish people as a whole were never called to salvation; it does not, however, negate the true calling of Israel and their future purpose.

What it is to be Chosen

If “chosen” when used as an adjective to Jews does not mean “salvation,” then it

must mean something else – that “something else” is God choosing to reveal His glory through them. Note that Genesis 12 states that salvation and blessings will come *from* Abraham’s physical descendents, so that all tribes might be blessed. This shows that salvation was not exclusively awarded to the Jew, but it also shows that the Jews held a special spot in the revelation of this salvation. Though most modern Jews have rejected this salvation through Christ, it still shows that part of the Jewish calling was to give salvation to all peoples.

Secondly, the Jews are to serve as a people that show God’s glory in governmental rulings. The Jews were picked out of all other nations to have God as their leader. Whereas Christians are called to follow God in whatever country under whatever government, Jews were called to establish their government (in the land promised to them) and rule it as God wished them to rule it. Genesis 17:8 shows that land was promised to Israel for them to rule and this land was made under an eternal covenant (17:9). If the covenant is eternal (as will be shown later in the article) and is a promise of land, then we must still assume this promise is in effect. There is no reason to doubt that God has gone back on His promise, as He does no such thing (Romans 11:28-29). Therefore, this land is still chosen for the Jews and the Jews are still chosen for the land.

Lastly, though we can never fully understand why God chose the Jews, we can get a hint that they were chosen to show God’s faithfulness to His people. God is faithful to this people He has chosen who have been in constant rebellion against Him since the days of Moses; how much more faithful is He going to be to those He has called to

salvation? The Jews, unlike any other race, have survived the test of time. Their culture is still intact, their language remains relatively unchanged, and they have held together more than any other culture while facing persecution that supersedes what any other nation has ever had to face. If God has rejected the Jews and is no longer faithful to them due to their unfaithfulness, we must assume that the Jews have bested God and survived when they shouldn't have. We must take a humanistic approach and believe that the Jews survived under their own power without any help from God. The faithful Christian cannot stomach such a thought, that man could possibly do well on his own without God. Thus, the Christian must conclude that the Jews survive today because they are still chosen, because God is faithful to His people.

The Jews Still Worship God

One objection that is often levied against the Jews is that they do not worship the same God as the Christians do, but this too is a mistake. Though practitioners of Judaism are sorely misguided on who God truly is, this does not mean they do not speak to Him (whether He speaks back, however, is another issue). It is the equivalent of two people saying they know a guy named Bob – Jay may say he knows Bob, say a few things about him, but not know that Bob is married, has kids, works at a law firm, drives a BMW, or anything of this nature. Jay may simply know that Bob is successful and might be offended by the idea that Bob is married. Larry, however, may know everything

about Bob and be his best friend. Just because Larry has a more complete knowledge of who Bob is doesn't mean that Jay doesn't really know Bob.¹² Likewise, just because the Christians have a more complete knowledge of who God is does not mean that Jews do not know Him at all.

Paul essentially says the exact same thing in Romans 10:2-3 when he states:

For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

Paul is stating that the Jews do have a zeal for God, but lack the proper knowledge of whom God is and therefore miss out on the entire point of salvation. The practitioners of Judaism in Paul's time (Pharisees) believe the exact same thing most modern Orthodox Jews do.¹³ Yet, he did not say they worship a false God, or that they

¹² The problem with this argument is some may try to say it is a universalistic approach to salvation – that all religions believe in God, but are just misguided in some way. First, the Universalist is partially correct – the reason religion exists is because every culture, at one point, knew the one true God and have since attempted to replicate Him. For the Jews, however, their view of God is not a *replication* of who God is, but instead is a *rejection* of who God is. The Jews know who God is on a minimal basis and do worship the one true God, but their knowledge of God is merely a partial knowledge (which is more than any other religion). However, partial knowledge of God does not render salvation. One is only saved by the atonement of Christ. Thus, if a person knows who God is partially it is still not enough to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, just because the Jews worship the same God on a limited knowledge doesn't mean the Jews are saved – their misguided view of God is what, unfortunately, prevents their salvation.

¹³ Orthodox Jews hold a view that is extremely similar to that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees placed little emphasis on sacrifices at the temple (which is why the Sadducees ran the temple and the Pharisees paid little attention, and also why the Pharisees, who were not associated with the temple,

think they worship the same God as Christians but are wrong; Paul stated that the Jews had zeal for God (indicating they were worshiping the same God), but lacked the proper knowledge to bring them to a true understanding of whom God is. The same can be said of modern Jews; they worship the same God the Christians do.

A Faithful God: Why the Jews Are Still a Chosen People

One of the most erroneous beliefs about the Jewish people is that they have somehow been rejected by God, but if this is true then no Jew could ever be saved. Paul actually dealt with this issue in his writings to the Romans. Romans 11:1-2 very adamantly states that God has not rejected the Jewish people:

I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? 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 Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

In explaining what Paul means, Leander Keck masterfully notes, "Israel as a people cannot be rejected if there are Israelites who are not rejected. Paul is not the exception that proves the rule (that Israel is rejected), because as a believer he is an

persevered the Roman destruction the temple while the Sadducees, who were closely related to the temple, did not survive). There was little need for redemption, little need to look for a Messiah, etc. Modern Orthodox Jews will teach that one gains favor with God by following the Tanach and the Talmud, just as the Pharisees did (though they did not have the Talmud, they did have rabbinical schools that people followed). It was not until the 18th century in Germany that Judaism began to change in the form of the Reform Jews (highly liberal) and the Conservative Jews (fairly liberal). The Orthodox Jews, however, still practice the same beliefs the Pharisees did during Paul's time.

Israelite (is is emphasized in Greek), a specific instance that demonstrates that God has not rejected the people. Adding 'whom He foreknew' underscores God's constancy: The One who on his own initiative chose Israel (and chose Jacob over Esau) has not responded to Israel's unbelief by rejection."¹⁴ Paul states that Israel has not been rejected because he (Paul) is a Christian.

Paul's argument in Romans 11 is quite simple – if the Jews were rejected as an ethnicity and were no longer chosen, then no Jew could possibly be saved. Paul's logic on this is to be rejected by God means there can be no salvation available – once a person is alienated from God that person cannot possibly come to Him, unless that person is more powerful than God's rejection. Paul then states that some Jews are saved. He points to himself and others within the Roman congregation as ethnic Jews who are saved. He then concludes that because of this, ethnic Israel has not been rejected by God.

This form of thinking is very common in Paul's writing to the Romans and follows basic syllogistic logic. The syllogism is very simple and looks like this:

- (a) If the Jewish people were rejected, no Jew could be a Christian.
- (b) Some Jews have come to Christ.
- (c) Therefore, the Jewish people haven't been rejected.

¹⁴ Leander E. Keck, *Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 264.

We must keep in mind that for (a) to be true (b) must follow. If (b) doesn't follow, then (c) must summarize a logical conclusion related to the situation between (a) and (b). If we change (c) to read (c1), "Therefore, the Jews are still rejected by God," then we have a logical contradiction. Unless (b) can be proven false, (c1) cannot be a logical acceptance in the syllogism Paul has presented and, therefore, one must logically conclude (c).

Romans 11:28-29 simply goes further to prove the point that Paul is making by stating that God's promises are irrevocable. Paul says:

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

In other words, from our own perspective the Jews might look as enemies for they have rejected the Gospel. From God's perspective, however, they are still loved because of what their forefathers did and because God's callings are irrevocable. Therefore, God could not have possibly rejected Israel, for if He did Paul would be wrong. If Paul is correct, then the Jews are still called and still chosen. If Israel has been rejected, if the Jews are no longer chosen, then Paul is wrong.

The Remnant of Israel

The Jews that are being saved, who prove Israel has not been rejected by God, serve as a remnant of Jews faithful to God through Israel's rebellion. Throughout the Old

Testament one can read of how the Jews would rebel, but there was always a remnant of faithful Jews who followed God. The Jews of today who have accepted Christ are no different – they are chosen for God’s blessings through who their forefathers were, but they are faithful to God by serving Him. The Jews of today who have accepted Christ are a remnant of faithful Jews. As Keck observes, “For Paul, ‘remnant’ does not refer simply to what is left over (as in a fabric shop) but to the enduring part that survives disaster and so assures the future.”¹⁵ Keck is stating a truth – if there is no future for the Jews, if they are no longer chosen, there is no need for there to be a remnant. The purpose of a remnant is to restore something to its original purpose. A remnant of survivors of Katrina in New Orleans would be there to restore New Orleans to its ideal place. They would not cease to be citizens of New Orleans. Likewise, the Messianic Jews serve to restore Israel to what it was supposed to be when the proper time comes. Paul would be holding out a false hope if Israel was, in fact, no longer chosen.

Through this remnant, however, all of Israel will be brought back to God. The current rebellion of God is merely part of His plan for the Jews as He will one day close off the Gospel to the Gentiles and open it up to the Jews. Romans 11:25-27 states:

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening

¹⁵ Ibid. 265

has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."¹⁶

The *Biblical Knowledge Commentary* explains this verse by saying, "Israel's corporate stumbling, which is temporary, not permanent, is called a **mystery**¹⁷...God's sovereign plan to put Israel aside temporarily in order to show grace to Gentiles is no basis for conceit on the part of the Gentiles; it is designed to display further the glory of God."¹⁸ Thus, Paul states that God has a future plan for the Jews, which would indicate that they are still quite chosen. Though the Jews are currently in rebellion against God – of which the rebellious Jews will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven (just as anyone, regardless of ethnicity, will not enter God's kingdom without being covered by Christ's blood) – this does not negate their chosen nature, specifically the future calling of God for their return to Him. If the Jews were rejected by God, one would logically have to ask how this return could be possible. If the Jews are rejected then such a spiritual return

¹⁶ Note that Paul calls the hardening of Israel a "partial" hardening. This lends further proof to the fact that God has not rejected Israel, but instead has partially hardened them against Him for His designated purpose and time and will one day bring them back to Him.

¹⁷ "Mystery" in Paul's writing isn't something that is not currently understood or never meant to be understood. A "mystery" is something that was previously not known to the recipient, but is now known through revelation.

¹⁸ Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983), 485.

simply is not possible, unless God decides to change His mind in the future.¹⁹ Knowing that God does not change, one must accept that the Jews, though in rebellion, are still chosen by God.

Hosea and His Whore

The book of Hosea presents God as a jilted husband and Israel as the prostitute turned wife who has been unfaithful to her groom. The entire point of Hosea, however, is that Israel will be punished for her unfaithfulness by being exiled, **but will not be forgotten by God and will one day be called back**. Hosea paints the accurate picture of Israel as a nation that had gone against God. Yet, through the book God never told Hosea to divorce his wife (who represented Israel) and never said He would forget Israel. Instead, God promises that He will one day restore Israel back to her glory.

The entire book, from chapters 1-13, discuss Israel's rebellion, her former stature with God, and what the consequences will be for Israel because of the pain she has brought to God – chapter 14, however, discusses the future restoration of Israel. Hosea 2:6 foreshadows this event when God says that He will “hem Israel in,” throw up walls to block her path, and leave her with no choice but to follow Him. This is a future promise, but has it been fulfilled?

¹⁹ *...which would then mean God can change. It would also mean that Paul is wrong. Therefore, by saying the Jews are no longer chosen, one runs into some major theological challenges – one cannot say the Jews have been rejected by God without changing the Christian faith and the ontology of God.*

Hosea is speaking to the Northern Kingdom (Israel) in his book, right before Israel's exile by Assyria. Most scholars date his ministry from BC 755 to BC 722. In verses 9:3 and 11:5 Hosea speaks of how Israel will be exiled and scattered throughout the entire world as punishment for her crimes against God. After Solomon, the 12 tribes split into two kingdoms. Ten tribes took the northern kingdom (Israel) while two tribes took the southern kingdom (Judah). Though Judah had some Godly kings (8), Israel had none. Thus, from the time of Solomon's death (BC 931) to the exile of Israel (BC 722) Israel did not have a single Godly king. This means that for 209 years, Israel lived in rebellion against God. As punishment, God promised He was going to exile these rebellious tribes and scatter them among the nations. To this day, Israel is still scattered and has yet to return to God spiritually.

The problem with the book of Hosea, however, is that the first 13 chapters are fulfilled while the last chapter has yet to be fulfilled. Chapter 14 is a double promise to return Israel to her land and, more importantly, to return her to God and end her rebellion. Most of Israel's land today is occupied by Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. There has yet to be a complete physical return, though about 60% of Israel's land composes modern day Israel. Spiritually, however, Chapter 14 is left almost completely unfulfilled. If the Jews are no longer chosen, then Chapter 14 serves as an unfulfilled promise of God that will never be fulfilled – Chapter 14 would indicate that God does not always live up to His promises. Thankfully, however, God upholds His promises and the Jews are still chosen, thus one day Chapter 14 will be completely fulfilled.

This promise cannot be in reference to the Church either. Some might try to argue that all promises in the Old Testament are now meant for the Church. Hosea 14, however, cannot in any way refer to the modern Church. For one, chapters 1-13 set the significance of chapter 14 and explain why chapter 14 is needed. Unless we want to advocate that chapters 1-13 refer to the modern Church as well (which would be laughable and illogical), we must conclude that chapter 14 is also meant for Israel. Likewise, the Church is composed of those who have humbled themselves before God in holy submission to Him. Though not perfect, they have been declared righteous by the blood of Christ. Chapter 14, however, is meant for a people in rebellion who are in desperate need of restoration. The Church simply does not fit this description, but Israel does. Therefore, it is impossible to conclude, with any intellectual honesty, that chapter 14 refers to the Church – it only refers to Israel.

Father Abraham

God established a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12, but expounded on it in Genesis 17:7-8, saying:

I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

Notice that there are many key words within this passage. God states that the covenant He makes with Abraham is eternal, everlasting, and will last through all His

descendants. This covenant, likewise, includes the inheritance of a land (Canaan). The land is promised to Abraham's physical offspring, that they might inhabit it and worship God in that land. Though God requires Abraham be circumcised, this serves as *proof* of one who has taken the covenant of God. If one is not circumcised, he is to be cut off from his people, but it says nothing about being cut off from God. Furthermore, God never says He will abandon Israel if they rebel. This, it would seem, is to keep consistent with His promise of an everlasting covenant.

Some attempt to say that Christians supplant Jews as Abraham's descendants, but in the case of the covenant in Genesis 17 this line of thinking simply does not work. Canaan is promised to Abraham's descendants. If, for the sake of argument, we accept that the Church has replaced the Jews, we would have to argue that the land of Canaan is meant for the Church. This brings up two very big problems:

- 1) The Church is called to go to all the nations of the world and not to establish a government. Christ, Paul, and Peter are all adamant that Christians are to obey the government and give the government what it is owed, but none of them come out and say Christians are to establish a government. For Christians to own a land, they would need a government. If this were the case then someone should have left a model for how this government should look – instead, the Bible is silent on the issue. Furthermore, Christians are called to go into all lands unto the end of the earth – it would make no sense for Christians to inhabit the land of Canaan when they are to be everywhere.
- 2) Were the Jews illegally holding the land of Israel prior to the incarnation of

Christ? If Abraham's promise was meant for the Church, then why was the land promised to Israel delivered to them by God when it was meant for God's faithful?

These are the problems presented when people attempt to supplant Israel with the Church in Genesis 17. It simply makes more sense that Genesis 17 is meant for Israel; being meant for Israel, one can assume the covenant is truly eternal, meaning the modern state of Israel is a partial fulfillment of Genesis 17.

God's Blessing

Since the substance of the covenant remains intact, it is safe to say that Genesis 12:3 is likewise still in effect. This means that those who curse the Jews will likewise be cursed. Those that bless the Jews will likewise be blessed. Though a Jew might be lost and have no salvation, they hold a special place in God's heart, so special in fact that if one is to harm him, and then one will suffer great consequences. Looking throughout history this has proven to be the case. Babylon, Assyria, Rome, Egypt, Canaan, Germany, Russia, the Papal States, and many others have all cursed the Jews and done great harm to the Jews. In return, these nations no longer exist, exist in poverty, exist in political turmoil, or have suffered great losses of life due to war, famine, or other things. It is no coincidence that any nation who harms Israel likewise ends up destroyed or severely crippled. It is also no coincidence either that the United States is blessed (or was blessed). Jews found refuge in Colonial America when they could find refuge in no other nation. They prospered in America when they were not allowed to prosper anywhere else. For three hundred years, Jews had lived in ghettos and in segregation – yet when they came

to the colonies they found peace and prosperity. America should not have won the Revolutionary War. She should not have survived economically. She should not have survived, period. Yet, because of her support of the Jews she became the most powerful nation on earth. God fulfills His promises.

The Two Covenants

One vital aspect Christians must understand is that there are not two covenants within the Bible concerning salvation – there is merely one covenant that is slowly revealed as the text progresses. The “Old Testament Saints” were saved by faith, just as we are saved now. One misconception is that these saints were saved by the animal sacrifices or by following God’s word. However, as Hebrews 11 states, all of these saints were saved by faith through grace. Their works were merely a result of faith.

The salvation covenant was first revealed to man in Genesis 3:15. At that point the only thing mankind knew about the Messiah was that He would be a human and He would triumph over Satan. Moses was revealed more information and, as time progressed, more information was revealed about the coming Messiah. There were symbolic acts during these times, however, to remind the people of what the Messiah would do. The animal sacrifices were performed as a symbolic act of the ultimate sacrifice that was yet to come. When Christ came, He fulfilled the covenant – this does not mean He eradicated the covenant and began a new one. A good example is of a child who is excited about opening his present on Christmas morning. For a week before Christmas his parents give him one hint a day. Thus, he would know more about his present 3 days away from Christmas than he did 5 days away from Christmas. When he

finally opens his present his waiting and anticipation will be fulfilled. This does not mean, however, that he is finished with the present or has started a new waiting game. Instead, he now has what he has desired and hoped for. Likewise, the saints prior to Christ did not know who the Messiah would be, but relied on God's promises and hoped for His coming. When Christ came, He fulfilled their hope and completed the covenant so that today we have a full knowledge of who the Messiah is. The salvation covenant that God established in the beginning did not cease with Christ; it was fulfilled in Him.

Thus, the acts that the Jews committed prior to Christ did not save them, but were merely a manifestation of their faith in the coming Messiah – they were saved by Christ's sacrifice prior to Christ dying because of God's sovereignty and timelessness. To substantiate this theory, E. Ray Clendenen states, "...since the eternal and timeless God is sovereign over events, He could apply the work of Christ to Old Testament believers in response to their faith, even though they had no specific knowledge of Christ."²⁰ Thus, there is no such thing as the "Old Covenant" that had to be done away with, but instead there is one covenant that was fulfilled in Christ.

The significance in this is that many people say the Church has replaced Israel because of the change in the covenants. If, however, there was no change in the covenants, then Israel has not been replaced. The salvation aspect of the covenant was merely opened to Gentiles. If this is the case then Jews cannot be rejected by God or no

²⁰ Clendenen, E. Ray, *The Apologetics Study Bible*, ed. Ted Cabal (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 29.

longer chosen as this would drastically alter the covenant God established – in fact, He would be guilty of violating the covenant He made (as it would no longer be everlasting). Thus, the fact that there is only one covenant proves that the Jews are still chosen.

Hebrews 8

The passage of Hebrews 8 would seemingly contradict the above, but it fails to do so under proper interpretation. Though the words “old” and “new” are used, these are merely referring to the *form* of the covenant and not the *substance* of the covenant. The “new” covenant has changed in its *form* because it no longer requires “shadow events.” The “old” covenant required adherence to the law, sacrifices, ceremonies, and many other things that served as a shadow of what was to come. The “new” covenant no longer needs that as Christ has come and we are to focus on Him. In both instances, the *form* – how the covenant is practiced – is different, thus one is “old” and one is “new.” The *substance* – that one is saved through faith in the Messiah – remains unchanged.

One might point to Hebrews 8:10 and show that Israel does not fit this description, thus the covenant made with Israel is no longer in effect. Not only would this statement contradict all the evidence brought forth (and thus show the Bible to have a contradiction), but it would assume that 8:10 has already been fulfilled. Can any ethnicity be said to fill 8:10? In fact, can any Christian – dead or alive – fulfill Hebrews 8:10? It states that God’s law will be embedded on the hearts and minds of the people and that the people will follow God’s law. Unless there is a Christian in this world that has ceased sinning, Hebrews 8:10 has yet to be fulfilled. Though the *substance* of the covenant is fulfilled, the *form* of the covenant has yet to be fulfilled. Instead, Hebrews 8:10 is

referring to a future event – when all of God’s saints are in Heaven – where all of His children will be perfect and will no longer sin. Thus, nothing in Hebrews 8 disproves that there is one salvific covenant and that Israel is still a part of that covenant (though she will not wholly accept this covenant until a future date).

Jewish Persecution of Christians

There is no denying the fact that the most common charge against the Jews – that they used to persecute Christians – is a very accurate charge. It was the Pharisees who led the charge in having Christ killed. It was the Pharisees who hunted down and murdered early Christian converts. Yet, one must wonder why the Jews did this to begin with.

Jewish persecution began against Christians because all of the first Christians were Jews. The religious leadership saw many Jews becoming followers of “The Way,” which the Pharisees saw as rebellion against God. The Pharisees came about shortly after the Maccabean revolt in BC 163. They taught that if the Jews were to never be conquered again, they would need to follow the laws of God. Thus, the Pharisees began a “salvation by works” belief. They believed they were conquered by the Romans because of Jewish rebellion and therefore went after anyone who sought to ruin the holiness of Israel. These early Christians were teaching a faith different from what the Pharisees were accustomed to, thus they sought the death of these Christians for fear that the Christian beliefs would incur God’s wrath. Though Jews did persecute early Christians, it is because these Christians were Jews, thus it doesn’t make much sense to hold this over the modern Jew’s head.

More importantly, modern Jews do not support the killing or persecution of Christians. There are tiny Hassidic sects in Israel that will still throw rocks through the windows of Christians, but these sects are looked down upon in Jewish society. Most Jews wish to live at peace with their Christian neighbor and have no desire to persecute him. It makes no sense to hate the Jews because of what a few of their ancestors did 2,000 years ago. The modern Jew harbors no hatred toward the Christian; we should be at peace with this.

The Christian Persecution of Jews

The Jewish persecution of Christians lasted from approximately 33AD to 150AD; the Christian persecution of Jews, however, has lasted from about 325AD to the modern day. It is absurd to still be upset over 120 years of persecution when we are guilty of 1,700 years of persecution against the Jews. The greatest obstacle a Jew has to overcome in accepting Christ isn't a non-belief in the Messiah – it's the thought that he will have to align himself with a people group that has eradicated millions of his brethren. Christian persecution against the Jews did occur and does exist; it must be addressed.

Persecution of the Jews has occurred and continues to occur in the modern age. In the Holocaust there were many Christians that hid the Jews, but there were also many Christians that ordered the death of the Jews. Many deacon board members have said disparaging things about the Jews. In Russia there are many Christian officials that have no problem ordering the death or persecution of impoverished Jews living in Russia. The Jews have been beaten by men holding crosses for seventeen centuries – it still greatly affects them to this day.

The Christian persecution of the Jewish people is grossly immoral and something for which we should apologize. Some might say that since we personally did not commit these crimes we should simply ignore them. Though there is an element of truth, the fact is people abused the name of Christ in order to commit these heinous acts. If I wanted to befriend a black man or establish a relationship where I could lead him to Christ, I wouldn't walk up to him, use a derogatory name when talking to him, blame him for the Civil War, blame him for all the riots, and then witness to him. Likewise, it makes no sense to deny an apology to the Jewish people for what Christians have done, blame them for all the ills in the world, but then turn around, and witness to them. If we ever hope for the Jewish people to return to God, we must first begin apologizing to them for what God's supposed chosen have done to the Jews.

The Christian persecution has been so great that it has literally wiped out millions of Jews over the years. According to James Carroll, Jews accounted for about 10% of the Roman Empire's population. By that account, there should be 200 million Jews today; instead, there are 16 million.²¹ Even if we assume that Carroll is off by 100 million, that still means that Christian persecution prevented or killed 84 million Jews in the past 1,700 years. There is no greater Holocaust. The reason for this population loss is quite simple: Christian persecution. The German Crusade of 1096 where French and German peasants, influenced by the clergy, attacked and killed thousands of Jews in the countryside was

²¹ *Antisemitism*, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved January 09, 2008, from Reference.com website: <http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Antisemitism>

merely one of the many causes for the population drop. Other things that helped were the Exile from England (1290), the Spanish Inquisition, Spanish Exile (1492), Portuguese Exile (1497), the multiple Crusades where Jews were killed in Europe and the Holy Land (specifically the Second Crusade of 1147 where Jews were frequently massacred in France), the Shepherd's Crusade of 1251 and 1320, the French Exile (1396), the Goa Inquisition in India by *Christian Missionaries* (1552)²², massacres by Portuguese Christians in India in the 17th century, and these barely scratch the surface. The irony in all of this is that through all the persecutions, from the 9th century all the way up to the 19th century, Jews sought refuge in Eastern Germany and Poland. From 1939 to 1945, anti-Jewish sentiments in Europe climaxed with the Holocaust, wiping out the Jewish descendents in Poland. Their ancestors sought Germany and Poland as a refuge – instead, it turned into their grave. All of this was caused by men who claimed the name of Christ.

Jews and the Early Church Fathers

To justify replacement theology many Christians will turn to the early Church fathers as justification for such theology. They will point out how Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and many others speak of the Jews as “enjoying” the death of Christians and teaching that the Jews were no longer chosen. Anything the Church fathers say on any issue, however, should be taken with a grain of salt. The reason is the early

²² Prior to the Christian missionaries, India was a place of refuge for the Jews. For whatever reason, India has always been a place of refuge for Jews. The Hindus protected them and during WWII, when not even America would take in Jewish refugees, India was accepting any and all Jews from Europe. To this day India remains a great supporter of Israel, second only to the United States.

Church fathers also believed in a sacral system (mixing government and religion), infant baptism, persecution of religious dissenters, that one could lose one's salvation, absolute Papal authority, the perpetual virginity of Mary, and many other theological errors. When they were consistently wrong on such doctrines it makes little sense to accept their teachings *prima facie* without comparing their teachings to Scripture.

Though the early Church fathers are wise and are a good source of philosophy and theology, their teachings must be compared to and validated by Scripture – if their teachings cannot be validated by Scripture, we should ignore that aspect of their teaching. Again, Follis, when speaking of Calvin's view of the Church fathers, states, "Calvin treats the Fathers as partners in conversation rather than as authorities in the medieval sense of the term. They stimulate Calvin in his reflections on the text...Nevertheless, they do not have the last word. Paul does."²³ In other words, we should never let the Church fathers have the final say on an issue or hold their opinion up in any regard unless there has been a strong Scriptural backing for what is being said. Scripture must validate each teaching, otherwise the teaching is either subjective (neither being validated or banned by Scripture) or wrong (being banned by Scripture).

Though the Church fathers were highly educated in Greek philosophy, their view of the Jews should be highly suspect because they lacked a proper theological education. Around the turn of the 3rd Century, Christianity was almost completely Gentile with no

²³ Follis, 19

Jews. Unfortunately, when these Gentiles came to Christ, they brought their preconceived philosophies about the world with them, which then shaped the face of Christianity. It also led to a massive amount of misinterpretation of the Tanach since none of the Church fathers could speak Hebrew or Aramaic. Should we really trust these fathers on Jewish issues when they could not even study the Bible in its original language? Likewise, by coming into the faith as Gentiles, we must note that it was Gentile fathers saying Israel had been cut off. The earliest Church father, the only one that spoke with the authority of God, said that Israel had not been rejected and had not been cut off (Romans 11). Paul had the proper education in Jewish theology and Greek philosophy – the early Church fathers lacked the former.

Furthermore, many of the early Church fathers were speaking out of bitterness for what had occurred just half a century to a century before and were also speaking from their Roman heritage. Many of them would have remembered or heard stories of how the Jews persecuted the Christians. In their Hellenistic minds – where gods would reject people if they offended the gods – it made no sense that God would still accept the Jews when they were persecuting Christians. From their Roman and pagan background, they were accustomed to the gods rejecting people when the people sinned. Thus, the belief that God somehow rejected the Jews comes more from a pagan mindset and does not find its place in Scripture. The early Church fathers, it is argued, were simply bitter and holding onto an old part of their mindset – they had no Scripture to validate their claims.

Martin Luther's Little Secret

Just as the early Church fathers were misguided on the Jews, one of the earliest reformers, Martin Luther, also held a very skewed view of the Jewish people. One of Luther's most famous, and hidden, works is *The Jews and Their Lies*. In this book he speaks of how the Jews love to watch Christians die and how the Jewish people, regardless of race, are cursed by God. Early in the book Luther indicts all ethnic Jews by stating, "But all of them are surrounded with their blood and circumcision."²⁴ Therefore, according to Martin Luther, all Jews were guilty of killing Christ and were equally rejected by God, even if they came to Christ. Luther's view of the Jewish people was sorely off and certainly aids in harming his reputation as a great theologian.

Luther took his belief quite far by issuing six "rules" for how the German princes should handle the Jews in their provinces.²⁵ They are as follows:

- 1) The Christians are to avoid Jewish synagogues and schools. Though Luther never says to destroy these places, he does state that they should be set ablaze and burned to the ground, though he does not issue it as an edict, merely as an afterthought in his rant.
- 2) The Jews are to have their houses taken away and forced to live in ghettos. The houses in the ghettos should preferably be no better than stables.

²⁴ Martin Luther, *The Jews and Their Lies* (St. Louis: Christian Nationalist Crusade, 1948), 28.

²⁵ Ibid. 39-42

- 3) They are to have the Tanach, prayer books, and Talmud taken away from them and burned. Any Jew that is caught praying to God is to be punished severely.²⁶
- 4) Any rabbi that is caught teaching is to be punished, most likely flogged, banished from the land, or burned to death.
- 5) Jews are not allowed safe passage on highways or trade routes. Luther's reasoning is that the Jews have no right to be in the land to begin with. He later explains that the German princes should expel the Jews from the Holy Roman Empire and persecute and bring violence upon the Jews.²⁷
- 6) Jews should have all their money compensated and taken away from them. If a Jew converts, however, he is to be given enough money back that he can feed himself and his family – but his entire portion should never be returned to him.²⁸

Martin Luther's view fails to acknowledge that the Jews are in the image of God and therefore worthy of equal treatment. Luther abandoned the principles laid forth in the *imago Dei* and instead allowed his hatred to take over. His tirade against the Jewish

²⁶ Ibid. 57

²⁷ Ibid. 63-64

²⁸ This simply solidifies the idea that Luther was against ethnic Jews regardless of their religion. Though he certainly held most of his hatred for Jews who practiced Judaism, he also spewed his hatred against the Jewish people in general, believing them to be cursed by God.

people wouldn't be such an issue if for the fact that it has been directly linked as an influence on Nazi party officials. Bernhard Rust, Hitler's education minister (hand picked by Hitler), in an attempt to legitimize Hitler as a German reformer said, "Since Martin Luther closed his eyes, no such son of our people has appeared again. It has been decided that we shall be the first to witness his reappearance ... I think the time is past when one may not say the names of Hitler and Luther in the same breath. They belong together; they are of the same old stamp."²⁹ In other words, Hitler's view on the Jews was compared to the re-awakening of Luther's view on the Jewish people. This is why what Luther did should be remembered and it should tarnish him.

All of this doesn't mean, however, that Luther's impact on the world should be ignored or that Luther was an absolutely evil man – it simply means that Luther was misguided because of his previous experiences with the Jewish people. The irony is that Luther actually sought out, in the beginning of his ministry, to protect the Jewish people and win them to Christ. Luther even stated, "Absurd theologians defend hatred for the Jews. ... What Jew would consent to enter our ranks when he sees the cruelty and enmity we wreak on them—that in our behavior towards them we less resemble Christians than beasts?"³⁰ Luther thought it was absurd for any theologian to preach hatred against the Jewish man because it would prevent the Jew from ever coming to Christ. He even stated

²⁹ Bernhard Rust, "Germany and Jews," *Volkischer Beobachter*, August 25, 1933.

³⁰ Elliot Rosenberg, *But Were They Good For the Jews?* (New York: Birch Lane press, 1997), 65.

that the Jews were still chosen and brothers of Christ, which rendered they should be treated with dignity; “When we are inclined to boast of our position [as Christians] we should remember that we are but Gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ. We are aliens and in-laws; they are blood relatives, cousins, and brothers of our Lord. Therefore, if one is to boast of flesh and blood the Jews are actually nearer to Christ than we are...”³¹ According to Luther [early on] the Jews were to be treated properly and that they were the blood lineage of Christ. Unfortunately, Luther had negative experiences with the Jewish people and subsequently changed his view.³²

Luther unfortunately shifted his position from support of the Jewish people to desiring their destruction, mainly because they did not accept Christ as he hoped. Luther originally hoped that by treating the Jews properly, which they had not had prior to Luther’s idea, they would begin to come to Christ because of compassionate Christianity. When they did not do this, Luther [lacking grace] went after the Jewish people – both practitioners of Judaism and Christian Jews – declaring that they deserved no rights in the German lands. When Luther changed his position, he did so with a vengeance.

Luther’s changed position of the Jews went so far as to say Christians should not witness to the Jews and that the book of Esther was not canonical, but instead a piece of

³¹ Luther, Martin, *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*, trans. Walter I. Brandt (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 201.

³² This is not to say that it was the Jew’s fault for Luther changing his mind. The victim should never be blamed for the crime. Instead, it points out that while Luther had the right idea, he lacked the proper amount of grace to see his idea through. Since Luther lacked grace, his carnality took control and

Jewish propaganda. On speaking of witnessing to the Jews, Luther states, “Much less do I intend to convert the Jews. For that is impossible.”³³ Luther solidifies this position later in the book by saying, “We cannot extinguish the unquenchable fire of God’s wrath, nor convert the Jews.”³⁴ According to Luther, Christians should not even witness to the Jews because of God’s wrath. This, obviously, contradicts Matthew 28:16-20 and directly contradicts Paul’s belief about a remnant of Jews in Romans 11. Yet, Luther takes it further to state that the book of Esther is nothing more than Jewish propaganda, “O how they love that book Esther, which so nicely agrees with their bloodthirsty, revengeful, and murderous desire and hope!”³⁵ Obviously, Luther had “fallen off the deep end” in terms of his theology and actions towards the Jewish people. By stating that Jews should not even be witnessed to and that the book of Esther was not scripture, Luther delegitimized himself as an authority figure when discussing Jews.

“The Jews Did It!”

As alluded to earlier, there are many conspiracy theories that indict the Jewish people and are supported by Christians – though I maintain these theories are absurd and antithetical to Christian behavior, let us assume for a second that these groups do exist.

he spoke out against God’s chosen.

³³ *The Jews and Their Lies*, 9

³⁴ *Ibid.* 39

³⁵ *Ibid.* 17

Let us assume there is a group of men attempting to control the world and of this group of men, there are Jews involved. Let us assume that it was a Jewish advisor that got us into WWI and WWII.³⁶ Even if such an assumption is allowed, that these conspiracies should be used against the Jewish people violates three laws of Logic:

- 1) *Non causa pro causa* – Many of these conspiracy theories are simply elaborate non-sequiturs. If there was a Jewish person in a White House cabinet that influenced the US entry into a war, it would not follow that this makes all Jews guilty of this conspiracy. It is a broad leap to state that because one person of an ethnic group does an action that all people in that ethnic group must be guilty. Not only is it a broad leap, but it is a logical fallacy.
- 2) *Petitio principia* – These conspiracy theories often beg the question when arguing their case against the Jewish people. It points to these group of controllers that *contain* Jewish men (even if a majority), but is not exclusive to Jews. Therefore, the argument is shaped like this: (a) Jews are in Group A even though Group A is not exclusively Jewish. (b) Group A does something horrible. (c) Therefore, all Jews are evil because there were Jews in Group A. It is the same as attempting to control the evidence to fit a hypothesis – one begins with an idea (that all Jews are evil) and proceeds to find evidence to

³⁶ Again, I cannot stress enough how I do not believe these silly conspiracy theories. Most of them were originated from anti-Semitic beliefs to begin with, thus it is quite impossible to believe in many of them without first having a hatred or distrust for the Jewish people.

back this theory up. The problem is it begins with (c) and attempts to use (a) and (b) to validate (c). This is a logical fallacy as (a) and (b) must lead to (c). If one begins with (c) then one is biased towards all the evidence presented. If we continue with the use of this fallacy, then we can say that because Anglo-Saxon men were influenced by the Jews and allowed the Jewish actions to continue, all Anglo-Saxon males are guilty of the crime. This is simply a failed and illogical argument.

- 3) Fallacy of Composition – These conspiracy theories assert that because a few Jews are in on a power grab, all Jews are equally guilty. This is an example of taking the attributes of a minor part and applying them to the bigger part. An example of this is the following syllogism. (a) One piston on an engine is corrupt and no longer working properly, (b) the piston belongs to an engine in a 1998 Dodge Ram, (c) therefore all Dodge Ram's are corrupt and do not work. Just because (a) does not work and happens to belong to (b), does not mean that (c) follows. Likewise, assume that (a) Bob belongs to X , (b) Bob does something bad, (c) therefore everyone in X is just as bad as Bob. In both syllogisms a logical fallacy is committed. Likewise, it makes no sense to take the actions of 100 or even 1,000 Jews and apply it to the entire Jewish population. Even if all these conspiracy theories were true, there would only be a few dozen Jews trying to grab power. That is not even 1% of the Jewish population. Thus, even if these conspiracy theories are true, they say literally nothing about the Jewish people as a whole as it is a logical fallacy to apply

the actions of the minority to the majority. For one to use these conspiracy theories as an indictment of the Jews, one must dive into illogical thoughts and give up any sense of reasonable thinking.

Christianity is Jewish

The final reason of why Christians should abandon antisemitic attitudes is because Christianity itself is Jewish. I am not speaking of the ethnicity at this point, but instead of the religion. Christians do not replace Israel, but Christianity was the fulfillment and continuation of “Old Testament” Judaism. This fact, however, should cause us to love the Jews. As Edith Schaeffer says, “Christianity is meant to be Jewish. That is what it is all about. Christians ought to love Jews.”³⁷ If we remember that Christianity is an extension of what Judaism was, then we must view all practitioners of Judaism as brothers who are lost and misguided in the faith.

When we look to the New Testament we see all of the apostles, along with Christ, practicing Judaism. In fact, for Paul, all that had changed was he no longer needed to practice the Mosaic law since it had been fulfilled in Christ – for all intents and purposes, Paul practiced Judaism, only believing that the Messiah had come. In other words, it was a fulfilled Judaism. Paul went to the synagogues first in every town he entered, not just to preach, but also to worship. The Last Supper was an addendum to Passover, a fulfillment of Passover. In Passover, the each act is to remind Israel of what they endured during the

³⁷ Edith Schaeffer, *Christianity is Jewish* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers Inc, 1975), 11.

Egyptian slavery, while other acts are to look forward to the coming Messiah. It is a precursor to redemption, with Jesus fulfilling the ceremony by offering His body and blood. All of the Jewish holidays mandated in Scripture are seen as practiced in the New Testament, by both Christ and the Disciples. In fact, Jesus even celebrated Chanukah.³⁸ It is quite obvious that Christianity, having its roots in Judaism, is really a Jewish religion.

This, of course, has prompted an anonymous poem that reads:

How odd of God
To Choose the Jew
But not so odd
As those who choose
The Jewish God
And hate the Jew

We must realize that Christians do worship the “Jewish” God, as God is unchangeable and He revealed Himself to them before He ever revealed Himself to the Gentile ancestors. As Francis Schaeffer states, “In these two thousand years in which the way was prepared for the coming of the Messiah, all the earth was in darkness but for the light that shone in Israel. While our ancestors worshipped we know not what, but certainly not the living God, the Jews were called God's chosen people.”³⁹ In other words, God had called the Jewish people and was giving them light while the rest of the world – Gentile ancestors – were in absolute rebellion against God and worshiping idols.

³⁸ John 10:22 – in this passage it says that Jesus went to the city to celebrate the “Festival of Dedication.” This is another name for Chanukah as Chanukah celebrates the day the temple was consecrated after the Maccabean revolt.

³⁹ *The Fundamental Christian and Anti-Semitism*, 18

Christians should never forget that the Jews were called first and that the Gentiles were *allowed* into the Jewish faith.

Christians must never forget that Gentiles were *grafted into* the tree, but that they do not *replace* the tree. Modern Christianity is a far cry different from what Christianity used to be. If we were to travel back in time to 36AD and attend a Christian service, we would find ourselves in a synagogue celebrating a traditionally Jewish practice, only with the Messiah as the focus. Instead, in the past 2,000 years, Christianity has become severely Hellenized in its approach to the Messiah. It is because of this culture shift that Gnosticism became such a problem in the early Church (and remains one to this day). More importantly, the Greek mindset of Christianity is what has led to the “easy believism” that permeates the Church today. In ancient Judaism works were required to show one’s love towards God and one’s faith towards God. Though one was saved by faith, one was also proved by works.⁴⁰ Under the Greek mind, however, one can believe something without necessary acting on that belief. What this translates to in the modern day is Christians believing one thing but acting another way. These problems could easily be avoided if Christianity went back to its Jewish roots.

⁴⁰ This is why the book of James provides such a problem for interpretation for most believers. James says that faith without works is dead. To the Greek mindset, this means that works produce faith. If, however, we recognize that James as a Jew with a Jewish background, we realize he is stating that works *prove* there is faith, but that faith *produces* works. The book of James can only be understood when one adopts a Jewish mindset.

Christianity, in fact, would be better served going back to its Jewish roots. Though Christianity has been Hellenized the past 2,000 years, it is not too late to reclaim its Jewish heritage. Christians should begin to celebrate the Jewish holidays, not as a mandate or a means to salvation, not as a way to please God, but instead as a way to gain a deeper appreciation for the Jewish people and the Messiah. All of the Jewish festivals are meant to point toward the Messiah, thus it would be quite fulfilling for Christians to practice these Jewish festivals with the idea that the Messiah has returned. Passover would celebrate God's faithfulness to the Jewish people in Egypt, but it would also celebrate how God freed us from the bondage of sin. Yom Kippur would still be a day of atonement where we asked for forgiveness, but it would also be a day where we thanked God that we are fully atoned by Him. These festivals and holidays would add appreciation for what Christ has accomplished.⁴¹

Adopting Jewish practices, as our Christian forefathers did in the book of Acts, would likewise help gain an appreciation for our Jewish brethren and open up doors. Imagine inviting your Jewish neighbors over for a Passover celebration – when they see you are celebrating it differently than what they are used to, you could use the opportunity to open up and explain why you celebrate it as though the Messiah has come

⁴¹ Some might sarcastically ask, "Why not celebrate the holidays of all religions and just put a Jewish twist on them?" This, of course, is ignorant. All of the Jewish high holy days are prescribed in Scripture. Muslim holy days, Hindu holy days, and so on are not found prescribed in Scripture – the Jewish ones, however, are found there. This is why it is safe to practice these festivals, mainly because they were prescribed by God.

(which He has!). Furthermore, by celebrating these holidays, we would gain a greater appreciation of our Jewish brothers and what they have endured. It would shed light on their fabulous culture and get us in touch with our rebellious brothers. They are prodigal sons, lost in their way – we are their adopted brethren. Celebrating their holidays is only natural and will lead to a greater appreciation and open doors with the Jewish people.

Conclusion

As seen, replacement theology is nothing more than a theological holocaust. Whenever Christians attempt to say that the Jews are responsible for the world's ills or that the Jews are no longer chosen, the Jews begin to suffer. Being in the image of God, we must respect them on this base level. Even if the Jews are no longer chosen, even if God has rejected them, they are still in His image and therefore worthy of respect for this alone. At the same time, one cannot hope to witness to the Jews if one harbors hatred toward them. As Paul states, we must witness to the Jews because they are still called by God, chosen for His blessing and will one day be called back to Him (as promised by both Paul and Hosea). We can help by apologizing for the years of persecution brought about by Christian hands. To ignore that Christians have persecuted the Jews is illogical. Any antisemitic thoughts against the Jews, such as conspiracy theories, are likewise illogical. We must bring glory to God in all that we do, but when we curse His chosen people we might as well curse God. The Jews are still chosen by God and Christians should welcome them in as brothers.

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