

NAC STUDIES IN BIBLE & THEOLOGY

FUTURE ISRAEL

WHY CHRISTIAN ANTI-JUDAISM
MUST BE CHALLENGED



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Chapter 1

ISRAEL AND CHRISTIAN ANTI-JUDAISM IN CONTRAST

That Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, was decidedly pro-Israel in his ministry is often neglected. This should not surprise us since the Lord declared to Ananias that Paul would be “My chosen instrument to carry My name before the Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Furthermore, it is clear from Romans 9–11 that the present status and future destiny of unbelieving national Israel in general, apart from a remnant of Jewish Christians, was a matter of passionate, unrelenting, even primary concern for Paul (Rom 1:16). He especially seems to have considered it necessary that Gentile Christians at Rome should be addressed, not simply on account of their predominance, but more particularly because of their tendency to be arrogant toward Jewish believers (Rom 11:18–20). Paul’s concerns included the need to clarify whether the promises of God to national Israel have now been nullified. In other words, has national Israel sinned away the grace of God so that it is, now and forever, *persona non grata* in His sight? Hence, is there a future destiny for national Israel, as perhaps a minority of Jewish believers at Rome might talk about with persistence? Or is Jewishness now a matter of receding concern in the present since it will certainly have no future validity? Do believing Gentiles have any ongoing responsibilities toward unbelieving national Israel that include acknowledgement of a distinct covenantal future? To these questions the apostle responds that “the promises” still “belong” to Israel (9:4), that “the Word of God” has not “failed” to the promised seed of Abraham (9:6–8), that “God has not rejected His people” (11:1–2), that Israel has not “stumbled so as to fall” (i.e., to be beyond divine recovery, 11:11), that Gentile Christians are to humbly, and respectfully regard unbelieving Jews with fear (11:20), so that, as a consequence, eventually “all Israel will be saved” (11:26).

It is unfortunately true that over 1900 years of church history have not witnessed the eventual resolution of these problems as proposed by Paul, and especially at a practical level, however clarifying he may have intended to be. In the same vein then, it might well be asked, “Has the Christian Church learned anything in this regard, but especially in ethical terms, concerning its treatment of unbelieving Jews over many centuries according to Paul’s injunction (Rom 11:18–20)?” In spite of voluminous Christian study of these questions, the evidence culled from past centuries would tend to indicate abysmal failure, particularly in terms of the shameful record of Christianity’s consistently disgraceful treatment of the Jews. And further, this well attested reputation cannot possibly be divorced from the horrific record of anti-Judaism which erupted during the twentieth century.

However, even in this twenty-first century, the controversy still rages, seemingly afresh. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, as well as the reclamation of Old Jerusalem by the Jews in 1967, has only appeared to exacerbate the conflict whereby such terms as “Zionism” and “a Palestinian State” have become highly emotive epithets for fiercely opposing causes. While there has been substantial support for the nation of Israel within conservative evangelical Christendom, according to biblical presuppositions and identification as Christian Zionism, nevertheless a vociferous segment has opposed any acknowledgment whereby God continues to have present covenantal interest in His ancient people, especially in a national and territorial sense. Along with this reaction there has usually been the expression of sympathy for the beleaguered Palestinian people, particularly in terms of their being deprived of land and respect by the rapacious Israelis. As a result, a growing literary response from some Christians has challenged the very legitimacy of Israel’s existence, but particularly at a biblical and societal level. Much of this has suggested that the complex issues revolve around the need of justice for the Palestinians on account of their suffering at the hands of Jewish injustice. Allied to this belief has been the conviction that a compromise resolution must be brokered for the parties in conflict. Thus a Palestinian State must be estab-

lished alongside or within Israel (perhaps by means of a “Road Map” proposal), that would establish the relative social peace that has so far eluded the Middle East over the centuries.

As a result, opposition to Christian Zionism in biblical and covenantal terms has elicited the counter-charge of “theological anti-Judaism” from those who support the cause of national Israel, even though the Jews remain in general unbelief. Hence, the polarizing result has been a defensive loyalty expressed by Christian Zionists in the face of harsh criticism of national Israel by Christian sympathizers with the Palestinian and Arab cause. These anti-Zionist Christians usually espouse an Augustinian, homogenous eschatology that would absorb and supplant all former Jewish distinctions. Furthermore, this conflict has particularly manifested itself within much of conservative evangelical Christendom. Thus, some Christians maintain that Israel has a national and territorial eschatological future according to God’s covenantal purposes, and in particular a mass conversion at the end of this age. However, many others hold to an anti-Judaic belief denying that modern Israel has any eschatological future in national and territorial terms. This book proposes that the former of these two theses is the more biblically and morally correct. Further, I believe that such a difference is not merely a theological one that we can calmly agree to disagree over, as if divorced from any behavioral accountability. The reason is that the pro-Judaic perspective involves a vital ethical element, sharply contrasting with unethical anti-Judaism throughout church history, which is inextricably bound to the theological construct that we hope to demonstrate both exegetically and historically. However, we will first consider these two opposing eschatological perspectives from the viewpoint of specific historic examples concerning biblical interpretation.

National Israel with No Distinctive Eschatological Hope

I offer here two examples of at best a cool toleration of the Jews and certainly an absence of that Pauline passion which the apostle

maintained throughout his missionary endeavors. Whatever the terminology that is used concerning this perspective, whether replacement theology, supercessionism, fulfillment theology, transference theology, or absorptionism, they all amount to the same basic denigration of the Jews and ultimately of national Israel in the present Christian dispensation. More evidence in this regard will follow in subsequent chapters.

Aurelius Augustine

The monumental contribution of this fourth century church father of North Africa in the realm of eschatology cannot be exaggerated. It is not simply a question of his prevailing dominance over chiliasm whereby the church in his present world was esteemed as the true earthly representation of the heavenly city of God in anticipation of heavenly consummation; it is the fact that his teaching concerning the future of the Jews, in relation to the church triumphant on earth, both saved them from total decimation and preserved them for intentional humiliation. This was a major feature of Augustine's famous, yet obviously mistaken, interpretation of Ps 59:11, "Do not kill them [the Jews]; otherwise, my people will forget. / By Your power, make them homeless wanderers." So he concluded,

Therefore God has shown the Church in her enemies the Jews the grace of His compassion, since, as saith the apostle, "their offence is the salvation of the Gentiles." And therefore He has not slain them, that is, He has not let the knowledge that they are Jews be lost in them, although they have been conquered by the Romans, lest they should forget the law of God, and their testimony should be of no avail in this matter of which we treat. But it was not enough that he [God] should say, "Slay them not, lest they should at last forget Thy law," unless he had also added, "Disperse them;" because if they had only been in their own land with that testimony of the Scriptures, and not everywhere, certainly the Church which is everywhere could not have had them as witnesses among all nations to the prophecies which were sent before concerning Christ.¹

¹ Augustine, *The City of God*, 18.46. It is tragic that such obvious misinterpretation of this passage should have become so influential over the centuries that followed. Plainly, in Ps 59:11, David the Jew is interceding for his enemies, and not especially the Jews, when he declares, "Do not kill them; . . . By Your power, make them homeless wanderers."

So by way of imposition upon the text, David's enemies are interpreted as the Jews, being enemies of the church. Unlike the ferocity of some earlier church fathers, Augustine's influential attitude appears more temperate so that, with enforced humiliation, the vagabond Jews might be a testimony of God's dealings in judgment on them according to Scripture. However, the result of his seeming tolerant exposition here was what James Carroll described as a double-edged sword:

On one side, against Chrysostom and even Ambrose, it requires an end to all violent assaults against synagogues, Jewish property, and Jewish persons. . . . On the other side, Augustine's relatively benign attitude toward Jews is rooted still in assumptions of supercessionism that would prove to be deadly. The "Witness" prescription attributed to him—Let them survive but not thrive!—would underlie the destructive ambivalence that marked Catholic attitudes toward Jews from then on. Ultimately history would show that such double-edged ambivalence is impossible to maintain without disastrous consequences. For a thousand years, the compulsively repeated pattern of that ambivalence would show in bishops and popes protecting Jews—but from expressly Christian mobs that wanted to kill Jews because of what bishops and popes had taught about Jews. Such a teaching which wants it both ways was bound to fail, as would become evident at every point in history when Jews presumed, whether economically or culturally or both, to even think of thriving. This is the legacy that haunts the Catholic Church into the twenty-first century, a perverse legacy from which, despite the twentieth-century's jolts, the Church is not yet free.²

Consequently, the Augustinian legacy kept the Jews dispersed, disgraced, and depressed—except for the hope of their individual conversion, or until their national conversion at the end of this age when they would then become absorbed into the one true, holy, catholic, apostolic church. Hence, such a scattered preservation in no way anticipated any distinctive eschatological hope for the Jews. Rather for Augustine, in Romans 11,

Some Jews have believed in Christ, and they are the remnant of the natural olive and fulfillment of the divine promises to historical Israel. . . . The "Israel" that will ultimately be saved are the predestined elect, drawn into a unity out of Jews and Gentiles. . . . Judaism is simply relegated to the latter

² J. Carroll. *Constantine's Sword: the Church and the Jews: A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 218–19.

[non-elect] category, and its status in salvation-history assigned to the pre-Christian past.³

So the Christian can take to himself the name of Israelite since it has been forfeited by the Jews who, having lost their birthright, are now to be named Esau. Augustine commented on Ps 114:3,

For if we hold with a firm heart the grace of God which hath been given us, we are Israel, the seed of Abraham. . . . Let therefore no Christian consider himself alien to the name of Israel. . . . The Christian people then is rather Israel. . . . But that multitude of Jews, which was deservedly reprobated for its perfidy, for the pleasures of the flesh sold their birthright, so that they belonged not to Jacob, but rather to Esau.⁴

The effect then of this supercessionist teaching upon subsequent centuries was profound, as Carroll has pointed out. So Jeremy Cohen confirmed,

Augustine of Hippo bequeathed so much to western civilization that one need hardly wonder if this bequest included his ideas on Jews and Judaism. Indeed, modern students of Jewish-Christian relations typically attribute the theological foundations of the medieval church's Jewish policy to Augustine, referring as a matter of course to the legacies and principles of Augustinian anti-Judaism.⁵

Hence, Augustine's eschatology regarding Israel, as having played out over centuries of church history, is not something that any Christian ought to boast in thoughtlessly. This legacy is certainly unbiblical in its exegetical, theological and ethical outworking, and thus is un-Pauline. Consequently, it rightly justifies repudiating that basic supercessionist theology which has flowed from these historic beginnings. A better and more pro-Judaic eschatology is needed, and this we believe to be rooted in the full canvas of Scripture when rightly exegeted.

³ Peter Gorday, *Principles Of Patristic Exegesis: Romans 9–11 in Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1983), 171, 333.

⁴ Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms by Saint Augustine*, Vol. 5 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1853), 114.3.

⁵ Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 19. This is a significant study of not only Augustine's foundational contribution toward theological anti-Judaism, but also the widespread embrace in varying degrees of this legacy, through to the thirteenth century, by means of Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville, Agobard of Lyon, Anselm of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Thomas Aquinas.

John Calvin

The contribution of this sixteenth-century reformer of Geneva to the emergence of western civilization in Europe, as well as the Reformed movement within Christianity, was truly monumental. His indebtedness to Augustine, like that of Luther, was substantial, as the abundance of almost adoring references in his *Institutes Of The Christian Religion* indicates. According to the editor of the Battles edition of this work, “Calvin may be said to stand at the culmination of the later Augustinianism. He actually incorporates in his treatment of man and of salvation so many typical passages from Augustine that his doctrine seems here entirely continuous with that of his great African predecessor.”⁶

With regard to the Jews and Israel, there is an attitude of tolerance, similar to Augustine’s that is void of any distinctive, covenantal, passionate eschatological acknowledgment. As Paul Johnson explained,

Jean Calvin . . . was more well disposed towards Jews [than Luther], partly because he tended to agree with them on the question of lending at interest; he reported Jewish arguments objectively in his writings and was even accused by his Lutheran enemies of being a Judaizer. Nonetheless, Jews were expelled from Calvinist cities and the Calvinist Palatinate.⁷

Like Augustine, Calvin taught that the Christian Church had become the new spiritual Israel, the amalgam of Jew and Gentile, whereby past ethnic identity had become null and void. He commented on Rom 11:26, where Paul declares, “And in this way all Israel will be saved”:

Many understand this of the Jewish people, as though Paul had said, that religion would again be restored among them as before: but I extend the word *Israel* to all the people of God, according to this meaning, “When the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return [as an accumulating remnant] from their defection to the obedience of faith; and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God, which must be gathered from both; and yet in such a way that the Jews shall obtain the first place [at

⁶ J. Calvin, *Institutes Of The Christian Religion* (ed. J. T. McNeill; trans. F. L. Battles; Philadelphia, Westminster, 1960), I.lviii.

⁷ P. Johnson, *A History Of The Jews* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 242–43. Also refer to M. J. Vlach, *The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism* (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004), 56–59.

the commencement of the Church], being as it were the first-born in God's family." This interpretation seems to me the most suitable, because Paul intended here to set forth the completion of the kingdom of Christ, which is by no means to be confined to the Jews, but is to include the whole world. The same manner of speaking we find in Galatians 6:16. The Israel of God is what he calls the Church, gathered alike from Jews and Gentiles.⁸

Calvin's understanding of the future of national Israel can also be observed in his comments on Hos 1:10–11:

[F]or so long a time has passed away since their [the sons of Israel's] exile, and . . . since there has been no restoration of this people, it is certain that this prophecy ought not to be restricted to seed according to the flesh. For there was a prescribed time for the Jews, when the Lord purposed to restore them to their country; and, at the end of seventy years, a free return was granted them by Cyrus. Then Hosea speaks not here of the kingdom of Israel, but of the Church, which was to be restored by a return, composed both of Jews and of Gentiles.⁹

Also consider Calvin's explanation of the Lord's promise in Jer 32:37–41 of an "everlasting covenant" with those whom He would "gather . . . from all the lands where I have banished them" and "plant them faithfully in this land":

We now then understand what the Prophet means when he compares to a plantation the restoration of the people after their return from exile. We know, indeed, that the people from that time had not been banished, and that the Temple had ever stood, though the faithful had been pressed down with many troubles; but this was only a type of a plantation. We must therefore necessarily pass on to Christ, in order to have a complete fulfillment of this promise. . . . Let us then know that the Church was planted in Judea, for it remained to the time of Christ. And as Christ has pulled down the wall of partition, so that there is now no difference between Jews and Gentiles, God plants us now in the holy land, when he grafts us into the body of Christ.¹⁰

These instances clearly display the fruit of a subjective, imposition hermeneutic that appears to be more presuppositionally than exegetically driven. It is as if Calvin leapt from the plain meaning of

⁸ J. Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849), 437.

⁹ J. Calvin, *The Book of the Prophet Hosea* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 64.

¹⁰ J. Calvin, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854), 220–21.

the text right into Augustine's supercessionist lap. Our chief concern in this regard is that such a course is historically shown to be fraught with shameful results concerning the treatment of the Jews. This being the case, according to history and exegesis, we seriously question the validity of the eschatology that undergirds this legacy.

National Israel with a Distinctive Eschatological Hope

Both individuals discussed here exhibit a passionate concern for the Jews much more after the manner of the apostle Paul's. Here is warm-hearted, Judeo-centric eschatology at its best. More evidence in this regard will follow in subsequent chapters.

Horatius Bonar

While Horatius Bonar (1808-1889) is better known today as a nineteenth-century hymn writer, his overall ministry in Scotland was of far greater dimensions, both practical and scholarly, especially with regard to his preaching and writing. He participated in a remarkable moving of the Spirit of God in Scotland that involved Thomas Chalmers, William C. Burns and Robert Murray M'Cheyne. He also joined a Mission of Enquiry to the Jews in 1839 in which he, along with his brother Andrew and M'Cheyne, toured the Holy Land for the purpose of reporting their findings back to the Church of Scotland.¹¹ Another related concern of Bonar, which is also reflected in his prolific hymn writing, was a considerable interest in prophetic events, particularly from a premillennial perspective. He founded and edited *The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy* from 1849 to 1873. In 1847 he published *Prophetical Landmarks, Containing Data for Helping to Determine the Question of Christ's Premillennial Advent*, which went to at least five editions. Here then are some pertinent comments from his Judeo-centric writings that concern such a heartfelt love for the Jewish people.

To begin with Bonar declared:

¹¹ See A. A. Bonar and R. M. McCheyne, *Narrative of a mission of inquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839* (Presbyterian Board of Publication, n.d.; repr. ed. A. M. Harman, *Mission of Discovery: the Beginnings of Modern Jewish Evangelism*, Christian Focus, 1996).

Let us speak reverently of the Jew. Let us not misjudge him by present appearances. He is not what he once was, nor what he yet shall be.

Let us speak reverently of the Jew. We have much cause to do so. What, though all Christendom, both of the East and West, has for nearly eighteen centuries treated him as the offscouring of the race? What though Mohammed has taught his followers to revile and persecute the sons of Abraham? . . .

Nay, what though he [the Jew] may have a grasping hand, and a soul shut up against the world,—a world that has done nothing but wrong and revile him? What though he may inherit the crookedness of his father Jacob, instead of the nobility of Abraham, or the simple gentleness of Isaac?

Still let us speak reverently of the Jew,—if not for what he is, at least for what he was, and what he shall be, when the Redeemer shall come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Isa 59:20; cp. Rom 11:26].

In him we see the development of God's great purpose as to the woman's seed, the representative of a long line of kings and prophets, the kinsmen of Him who is the Word made flesh. It was a Jew who sat on one of the most exalted thrones of the earth; it is a Jew who now sits upon the throne of heaven. It was a Jew who wrought such miracles once on our earth, who spoke such gracious words. It was a Jew who said, "Come unto me and I will give you rest;" and a Jew who said, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me." It was Jewish blood that was shed on Calvary; it was a Jew who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. It was a Jew who died, and was buried, and rose again. It is a Jew who liveth to intercede for us, who is to come in glory and majesty as earthly judge and monarch. It is a Jew who is our Prophet, our Priest, our King.

Let us, then, speak reverently of the Jew, whatever his present degradation may be. Just as we tread reverently the level platform of Moriah, where once stood the holy house where Jehovah was worshipped; so let us tread the ground where they dwell whose are the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came. That temple hill is not what it was. The beautiful house is gone, and not one stone is left upon another. The seventeen sieges of Jerusalem, like so many storms rolling the waves of every sea over it, have left few memorials of the old magnificence. The Mosque of the Moslems covers the spot of the altar of burnt-offering; the foot of the Moslem defiles the sacred courts But still the ground is felt to be sacred; the bare rock on which you tread is not common rock; the massive stones built here and there into the wall are witnesses of other days; and the whole scene gathers round it such associations as, in spite of the rubbish, and desolation, and ruin, and pollution, fill you irresistibly with awe. . . .

So it is with the Jew,—I mean the whole Jewish nation. There are indelible memories connected with them, which will ever, to anyone who believes in

the Bible, prevent them from being contemned; nay, will cast around them a nobility and a dignity which no other nation has possessed or can attain to. To Him in whose purposes they occupy so large a space, they are still “beloved for their fathers’ sake” [Rom 11:28]. Of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever.¹²

Then Bonar boldly confessed:

I am one of those who believe in Israel’s restoration and conversion; who receive it as a future certainty, that all Israel shall be gathered, and that all Israel shall be saved. As I believe in Israel’s present degradation, so do I believe in Israel’s coming glory and preeminence. I believe that God’s purpose regarding our world can only be understood by understanding God’s purpose as to Israel. I believe that all human calculations as to the earth’s future, whether political or scientific, or philosophical or religious, must be failures, if not taking for their data or basis God’s great purpose regarding the latter-day standing of Israel. I believe that it is not possible to enter God’s mind regarding the destiny of man, without taking as our key or our guide His mind regarding the ancient nation—that nation whose history, so far from being ended, or nearly ended, is only about to begin. And if any one may superciliously ask, What can the Jews have to do with the world’s history?—may we not correctly philosophize on that coming history, and take the bearing of the world’s course, leaving Israel out of the consideration altogether? We say, nay; but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Art thou the framer of the earth’s strange annals, either past or future? Art thou the creator of those events which make up these annals, or the producer of those latent springs or seeds of which these arise?

He only to whom the future belongs can reveal it. He only can announce the principles on which that future is to be developed. And if He set Israel as the great nation of the future, and Jerusalem as the great metropolis of earth, who are we, that, with our philosophy of science, we should set aside the divine arrangements, and substitute for them a theory of man? . . .

I believe that the sons of Abraham are to re-inherit Palestine, and that the forfeited fertility will yet return to that land; that the wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad for them, and the desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose. I believe that, meanwhile, Israel shall not only be wanderers, but that everywhere only a remnant, a small remnant, shall be saved; and that it is for the gathering in of this remnant that our missionaries go forth. I believe that these times of ours (as also all the times of the four monarchies [Dan 2]) are the times of the Gentiles; and that Jerusalem and Israel shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. I believe that, with the filling up of these times of the Gentile pre-eminence, and the completion of what the apostle calls the fullness of the Gentiles, will be the signal for the judgments which are to usher in the

¹² H. Bonar, “The Jew,” *The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy* (July, 1870): 209–11.

crisis of earth's history, and the deliverance of Israel, and the long-expected kingdom.

. . . How Jewish history shall once more emerge into its old place of grandeur and miracle, and how it shall unwind from itself the bright future of all nations, I know not. But so it is fore-written, "What shall be the reconciling of them be, but life from the dead?" [Rom 11:15] "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" [Isa 27:6].¹³

How refreshingly different is the attitude here from that of Augustine and Calvin. Undergirding this teaching is not the eschatological blending of national Israel into mere shadowy insignificance and obscurity, but rather the acknowledgment that while grace has blessed the Gentiles in a grand manner, so too will that same grace of God, according to the same sovereign purpose, ultimately bless the Jewish people in a most climactic and triumphant sense. This is something to rejoice about, and not surprisingly Bonar has penned a hymn in this vein.

Forgotten! No; that cannot be,
 All other names may pass away;
 But thine, My Israel, shall remain
 In everlasting memory.
 Forgotten! No; that cannot be,
 The oath of Him who cannot lie
 Is on thy city and thy land,
 An oath to all eternity.
 Forgotten of the Lord thy God!
 No, Israel, no, that cannot be,
 He chose thee in the days of old
 And still His favor rests on thee.¹⁴

C. H. Spurgeon

Although like Bonar, his contemporary, he held Augustine and Calvin in high esteem, this pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London did not embrace their essentially Catholic eschatology. Rather, Spurgeon maintained a fervent interest in the Jewish people and particularly their being reached with the gospel. Preaching on

¹³ *Ibid.*, 214–15.

¹⁴ *Lamp & Light Hymns* (Hitchin, Hertfordshire, England: The Society for Distributing Hebrew Scriptures, 2000), 64.

Ezek 24:26 in 1855, just prior to the rise of modern Zionism, he plainly declared,

Not long shall it be ere they [the Jews] shall come—shall come from distant lands, where'er they rest or roam; and she who has been the off-scouring of all things, whose name has been a proverb and a bye-word, shall become the glory of all lands. Dejected Zion shall raise her head, shaking herself from dust, and darkness, and the dead. Then shall the Lord feed his people, and make them and the places round about his hill a blessing. I think we do not attach sufficient importance to the restoration of the Jews. We do not think enough of it. But certainly, if there is anything promised in the Bible it is this. I imagine that you cannot read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is to be an actual restoration of the children of Israel. "Thither they shall go up; they shall come with weeping unto Zion, and with supplications unto Jerusalem." May that happy day soon come! For when the Jews are restored, then the fullness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in; and as soon as they return, then Jesus will come upon Mount Zion to reign with his ancients gloriously, and the halcyon days of the Millennium shall then dawn; we shall then know every man to be a brother and a friend; Christ shall rule with universal sway.¹⁵

Speaking on Ezek 37:1-10 in 1864 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in aid of funds for the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Jews, Spurgeon declared,

This vision has been used, from the time of Jerome onwards, as a description of the resurrection, and certainly it may be so accommodated with much effect. . . . But while this interpretation of the vision may be very proper as an accommodation, it must be quite evident to any thinking person that this is not the meaning of the passage. There is no allusion made by Ezekiel to the resurrection, and such topic would have been quite apart from the design of the prophet's speech. I believe he was no more thinking of the resurrection of the dead than of the building of St. Peter's at Rome, or the emigration of the Pilgrim Fathers. . . .

The meaning of our text, as opened up by the context, is most evidently, if words mean anything, first, that there shall be a political restoration of the Jews to their own land and to their own nationality; and then, secondly, there is in the text, and in the context, a most plain declaration, that there shall be a spiritual restoration, a conversion in fact, of the tribes of Israel. . . . Her sons, though they can never forget the sacred dust of Palestine, yet die at a hopeless distance from her consecrated shores. But it shall not be so forever. . . . They shall again walk upon her mountains, shall once more sit under her vines and rejoice under her fig-trees. And they are

¹⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, I, no. 28, 1855 (Albany, Oregon: Ages Software, 1998), 382.

also to be re-united. There shall not be two, nor ten, nor twelve, but one—one Israel praising one God, serving one king, and that one king the Son of David, the descended Messiah. They are to have a national prosperity which shall make them famous; nay, so glorious shall they be that Egypt, and Tyre, and Greece, and Rome, shall all forget their glory in the greater splendor of the throne of David. . . .

If there be meaning in words this must be the meaning of this chapter. I wish never to learn the art of tearing God's meaning out of his own words. If there be anything clear and plain, the literal sense and meaning of this passage—a meaning not to be spirited or spiritualized away—must be evident that both the two and the ten tribes of Israel are to be restored to their own land, and that a king is to rule over them.¹⁶

Spurgeon derived a very different meaning from the OT with regard to national Israel than that of Augustine and Calvin. Indeed, when we return to Jer 32:41, it is obvious that Spurgeon's understanding of this passage is fundamentally different from that of Calvin which we previously referenced. So in 1887 he declared,

We cannot help looking for the restoration of the scattered Israelites to the land which God has given to them by a covenant of salt: we also look for the time when they shall believe in the Messiah whom they have rejected, and shall rejoice in Jesus of Nazareth, whom today they despise. There is great encouragement in prophecy to those who work among the seed of Israel; and it is greatly needed, for of all mission fields it has been commonly represented to be one of the most barren, and upon the work the utmost ridicule has been poured. God has, therefore, supplied our faith with encouragements larger than we have in almost any other direction of service. Let those who believe work on! Those who believe not may give it up. They shall not have the honor of having helped to gather together the ancient nation to which our Lord himself belonged; for be it never forgotten that Jesus was a Jew.¹⁷

Here then we especially draw attention to the more literal interpretation by Bonar and Spurgeon when compared with Augustine and Calvin. But also, with the aid of centuries of hindsight along with the present state of the Middle East at our fingertips, we frankly declare the approach of Bonar and Spurgeon toward the sacred text to be much closer to the truth, that this is the intended meaning of God's inspired Word. Augustine's renowned allegorical hermeneutic was not entirely followed by Calvin, and in this eschatological sce-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, X, 1864, no. 582: 533, 536–37.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, XXXIV, 1887, no. 2036: 545.

nario Calvin did far more consistently and accurately exegete the sacred text as a whole than did his mentor.

I reiterate, however, that the doctrines deduced by these opposing schools of eschatology, the one being Judeo-centric, the other Judeo-eccentric, have profound ethical consequences. On the one hand, Judeo-centricity, as represented by Bonar and Spurgeon, exults in the national seed of Abraham and its promised, fulfilled, territorial glory through sovereign covenant grace. Consequently, it esteems that seed, according to Paul's exhortation in Rom 11:18–20, because it remains "loved because of their ancestors" (Rom 11:28). On the other hand, Judeo-eccentricity, as represented by Augustine and Calvin, dismisses the national seed of Abraham beyond the perimeter of the kingdom of God, except for the condescending inclusion of "a remnant chosen by grace" (Rom 11:5), that has no ultimate, divine, national, territorial validity. Augustine and Calvin were at best tolerant of the Jews; Bonar and Spurgeon were deeply affectionate toward the Jews. Which of these parties approximates the attitude of Paul toward his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom 9:3, ESV), and what is it about the doctrine they embrace that produces their kindly disposition? The answers to these questions are abundantly clear and are especially significant with regard to the prosperity of Jewish evangelism in this present age.