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## JERRY FALWELL AND THE HERESY OF CHRISTIAN ZIONISM

by James B. Jordan, Th.M.

Jerry Falwell has emerged as a leader of a certain kind of conservative Christianity. Unfortunately, one of the component parts of Mr. Falwell's theological and political program is a grotesque heresy, the heresy of Christian Zionism. It is the purpose of this essay to explore that heresy.

Zionism is a political movement which centers on the belief that the Jewish people deserve the right to possess the land of Palestine as their own. During the last part of the 19th and first part of the 20th centuries, Zionism gained support throughout the Christian West. This was due to two factors: the influence that Jewish money could buy among politicians, and the emotional support that the history of Jewish tribulation could elicit from a Christianized public conscience. (On the former aspect, see Ronald Sanders, *The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate for Palestine*, Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1984).

With this support, Zionist guerrillas succeeded in throwing Palestine into havoc during the late 1940s, and eventually took over that land. The result was the disenfranchisement of the people who had historically been there. The Moslem Palestinians were formally disenfranchised, and the Palestinian Jews were effectively disenfranchised as a result of being swamped by larger numbers of European Jews who emigrated to the new State of Israel.

It is important to realize that the most conservative Jews were anti-Zionists, believing that Palestine was not to become a Jewish land until made so by the coming of the Messiah. (This viewpoint was dramatized in the recent, and rewarding, film, *The Chosen*.) Much of the most severe criticism of the political Zionist movement has come from anti-Zionist Jews, the most noted being Alfred M. Lilienthal (his magnum opus being *The Zionist Connection*, Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1978).

Spurious criticisms of Zionism abound on the right. I have no wish to be associated with these, and so at the outset I want to critique them before critiquing the heresy of Christian Zionism. First of all, we hear from some rightist sources that it is a myth that 6,000,000 Jews were slaughtered by the National Socialists. It is argued that there were not that many Jews in Europe, that it would be impossible logistically to do away with that many people given the time and facilities which the Nazis had, and so forth. This maybe true; I have absolutely no way of knowing. The argument, however, seems to be that virtually no Jews were slaughtered by Nazis, and this is nonsense. Even if the number is 600,000 rather than six million, the event is still a moral horror of astonishing magnitude. Even if only one man were killed simply because he was a Jew, this would be a moral horror. And there can be no doubt but that many, many Jews were slaughtered.

Of course, a blasphemous theology has been erected upon this in some Jewish circles, which is the notion that the Nazi persecutions fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 53, and that the Jews suffered for the sins of the world. As Christians we can only abominate such a construction, and we must call it what it is: a Satanic lie. Still, it is not necessary to deny the horror of the event in order to argue against an evil theological construction put upon the event.

Perhaps more common is the assertion that most modern Jews are not Jews at all: They are Khazars. (On the Khazars, see Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, Random House, 1976.) The Khazari race seems to lie behind the Ashkenazik Jews of Eastern Europe. This kind of assertion can, of course, be debated. The real problem in the discussion is the notion that Jewishness is a blood or racial phenomenon. It is not.

Biblically speaking, a Jew is someone who is covenanted into the people of the Jews by circumcision, for better or for worse. When Abraham was commanded to circumcise, he was told to circumcise his entire household, including his 318 fighting men and his other domestic servants (Gen. 14:14; 17:10-14). Competent scholars imagine that Sheik Abraham's household probably included at the very least 3000 persons. These servants multiplied as the years went by, and Jacob inherited them all (Gen. 27:37). Although only 70 from the loins of Jacob went down into Egypt, so many servants went along that they had to be given the whole land of Goshen in which to live.

All these people were Jews, but only a small fraction actually had any of Abraham's blood in them. Later on we see many other people joining the Jews; indeed, the lists of David's men include many foreigners, of whom Uriah the Hittite is but the best known. What this demonstrates is that covenant, not race, has always been the defining mark of a Jew (as it also is of a Christian). Genealogical records were kept for the immediate family, of course, since the Messiah had to be of the actual blood of Abraham, and later of David; but this could not have applied to more than a fraction of the total number of people.

Thus, the Jews are those who claim to be Jews, who are covenanted with the Jews. The Khazari converted to Judaism in the Middle Ages, and they are Jews, British-Israelist rightist nonsense to the contrary.

(Of course, modern Zionists do not understand this religious principle any more than do their British-Israelite critics. Both conceive of everything in terms of blood and race.)

So then, it is spurious to criticize Zionism on the grounds that "Jews really didn't suffer during World War II," or "Who knows who the real Jews are?" It is pretty obvious who the Jews are, and they are, as always, a force to be reckoned with.

The third line of criticism against Zionism concerns the rightness or wrongness of its invasion and conquest of Palestine. We can listen to arguments to the effect that the Jews stole the land from its inhabitants, that they have persecuted the Palestinians, that they committed horrors during their guerrilla campaign, and the like. Then we can listen to arguments which say that the Jews in Palestine were mistreated under Moslem rule, that the Palestinians are better off today under enlightened Jewish government than they formerly were, that the Jews have exercised dominion over the land and the Moslems did not, thereby forfeiting their right to it, and the like.

Actually, none of this is any of our concern as Christians. As Christians we see both Jews and Moslems as groups which have rejected Christ as Messiah, and who have opposed the true faith. If they want to convert, we rejoice. If they want to kill each other off, then that is too bad, but let them have at it — there's nothing we can do about it.

But then, that brings us to the issue: Are Bible-believing Christians supposed to support a Jewish State, for theological reasons? Such is the assertion of Jerry Falwell, and of the heresy of Christian Zionism. Let us turn to this doctrine.

During the nineteenth century, a peculiar doctrinal notion known as "dispensationalism" arose. Its leading lights were Darby and Scofield; its Bible was the Scofield Reference Bible; and in recent years its primary headquarters has been Dallas Theological Seminary. Technicality, dispensationalism teaches that God has two peoples in the history of the world: Israel and the Church. We presently live in the Church Age, and God's people today are Christians, the Church. At the present time, the Jews are apostate enemies of God and of Christ, and are under God's judgment until they repent.

Someday soon (it's always soon), Christ will return to earth invisibly and snatch away all the Church-Christians (this is called the Rapture of the saints). At that point, God will go back to dealing with Israel. There will be a seven-year period called "The Tribulation"; and during that period, apostate Jewry will form an anti-God alliance with the Beast, but God will begin to convert the Jews, and in time the Beast will turn and begin to persecute these converted Jews. Just when things look hopeless, Christ will return and inaugurate the Millennium.

One other point to note: There are absolutely no signs that the Rapture or the Church is near. It will come "as a thief in the night."

Now, this entire scheme, though popular in recent years, has no roots in historic Christian interpretation of the Scriptures, and at present it is collapsing under the weight of criticism from Bible-believing scholars of a more historically orthodox persuasion. All the same, there are several things to note.

First, by teaching that there are no signs which precede the Rapture, dispensationalism clearly and explicitly implies that the modern State of Israel has nothing to do with Bible prophecy. If Israel collapsed tomorrow, it would make no difference. The existence of the State of Israel, while it may encourage dispensationalists to believe that the Rapture is near, is of no theological prophetic importance.

Second, dispensationalism teaches that Jews of today, and even into the Tribulation period, are apostate, and this certainly implies that they are under the wrath and judgment of God. Christians should minister to them, and try to convert them, and show them all kindness as fellow human beings; but Christians should understand that *during the Church Age, the Jews are not the people of God*. Rather, the Church is the people of God today.

Third, by teaching that Israel is "set aside" during the Church Age, dispensationalism clearly implies that the promises made to Israel are also "set aside" during that period. The land promise, and the promise "those who bless you, I will bless," have been set aside, until we re-enter "prophetic time." Thus, the Jews have no right to the land during the Church Age, and also there is no particular blessing for Gentiles who treat the Jews with especial favor.

What I am setting forth is standard, consistent dispensationalism. This is not what Jerry Falwell believes. As far as I am concerned, dispensationalism is sorely wrong in its prophetic view, but it is at least orthodox in its view of salvation and blessing. Blessing comes to the Jews when they repent and accept Christ; until then, they are under God's curse. How can it be otherwise? All blessings are in Christ. This is the teaching of orthodox Christianity, and Darby and the early dispensationalists were orthodox Christians on this point, as far as I can tell.

My description of dispensationalism may seem rather strange, because this is not the teaching of Hal Lindsey, of the modern Dallas Theological Seminary, or of other modern dispensationalists. I call these people "pop-dispies," for short. In contrast to the dispensational system, these people

hold that God *presently* has two, peoples on the earth: the Church and Israel. The consistent dispensational system teaches that there are no prophecies whose fulfillment takes place during the Church Age, because the Church exists outside of prophetic time, but modern pop-dispies teach that the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 was a fulfillment of prophecy.

Consistent dispensationalism teaches that God is dealing with His "heavenly" people today (the Church), and that during the Church Age, God has "set aside" His apostate "earthly" people (Israel). Pop-dispies, on the contrary, hold that *even though apostate, Israel still must be regarded as being under God's present blessing*. They hold the heretical notion that the Jews do not need to repent in order to obtain the blessings of God's covenant. They hold the unbiblical notion that apostate Jewry is not today under the wrath of God.

Jerry Falwell is, sadly, such a heretic.

A modern Zionist, Merrill Simon, has recognized this fact, and has written a book, *Jerry Falwell and the Jews* (Mid-die Village, NY: Jonathon David Publishers, inc., 1984; not available from Geneva Ministries). This book is a series of interviews with Rev. Falwell, designed to present him as a friend of Zionism, and to alleviate suspicions which liberal Zionist Jews naturally have when it comes to a supposedly-orthodox, fundamental Christian preacher.

I should like to cite some quotations from this book, and make some appropriate comments. The book says, however, "No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written consent from the publishers," which rather cramps my style. You'll just have to believe me, as I summarize Falwell's comments. You can always look it up for yourself.

On page 13, Falwell is asked if he considers the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. as a sign of God's rejection of Israel. Falwell answers by saying that he surely does not believe a "vengeful" God brought the Roman army to Jerusalem to destroy the Jews. Falwell ascribes the event rather to anti-Semitism.

Now let's hear what the Bible says about it. No, sorry, but we don't have space to quote Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 in their entirety. Read them at your leisure, and ask this question: Do we see an angry, "vengeful" God here threatening to bring horrors upon Israel if they apostatize? Also read Psalm 69:21 and ask Whom this refers to, and then continue reading until the end of the Psalm, remembering that the Romans surrounded Jerusalem at Passover time. Notice Psalm 69:25 speaks of the "desolation" of Jerusalem, and consider that in connection with Jesus' pronouncement of the desolation of Jerusalem in Matthew 23:38. Sorry, Jerry, but you are completely out to lunch here.

On page 25, Falwell says that he believes anti-Semitism is inspired exclusively by Satan, as part of his opposition to God. Jerry, I recommend you read Job chapters 1 and 2. You'll find that Satan is never allowed to do anything without God's permission. Moreover, you'll find from the rest of the Bible that God frequently raises up enemies against His people, as scourges to punish them. Read the Book of Judges. Read Kings and Chronicles about Assyria and Babylon. Read Habakkuk.

It is true that anti-Jewish feelings are not part of the Christian message, and that Christians should be as considerate toward Jews as they are toward all other men. It is also true, however, that it is God Who stirs up the Babylonians and Assyrians. Until the Jews repent and convert (as Romans 11 promises that someday they shall), they remain God's enemies, and He does stir up pagans against them. Anti-Jewishness has been part and parcel of secular humanism from the time of Frederick II, through the Renaissance, down to today. The Christian Church protected the Jews throughout the Middle Ages, and has continued to do so.

(On the Church's protection of the Jews, see Harold J. Berman (himself a Jew), *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*, pp. 90, 222; Harvard U. Press, available from Geneva Ministries, \$32.50 [sorry, that's the best price we can give on this valuable work].)

On page 55, Falwell says that Jews and Christians may differ at some points, but they have a common heritage in the Old Testament. Jerry, would you say the same to a Moslem? You're wrong anyway, by the way. Judaism looks to the Talmud, not to the Bible, as its law. It shows extreme ignorance of Judaism, medieval or modern, to think that Christians can appeal to the Old Testament as common ground. Judaism never approaches the Bible except through the Talmud.

On page 62, Falwell says that the future of the State of Israel is more important than any other political question. He says that the Jews have a theological, historical, and legal right to Palestine. He affirms his personal commitment to Zionism, and says that he learned Zionism from the Old Testament.

The Bible teaches us that when Adam and Eve rebelled, they lost their right to the Garden, and God cast them out. God used the very same principle with Israel, giving them the land, but warning them over and over again that if they rebelled, they would be cast out. How Falwell can read the Old Testament Scriptures and fail to see this, is beyond me. Modern apostate Jews have absolutely no theological, and therefore no historical and legal right to the land of Palestine.

I believe, with the Church of all ages, that the New Testament equivalent of the "land" is the whole world, in Christ, and ultimately the New Earth. God's people, Christ-confessors, are given the whole earth, in principle, and progressively will take dominion over it in time. Even if I wrongly believed (as dispensationalists do) that someday the land of Palestine would be given back to the Jews, I would have to say that they must convert to Christ first!

On page 68, Falwell says that one thing in modern Israel disturbs him. It is that Christians do not have the liberty to evangelize for the gospel. In other words, *Falwell is aware that Christians are being persecuted in Israel today, but he still supports Israel!* If this is not a betrayal of the faith, what is?

Finally, on p. 145, Falwell is asked about abortion, since modern Jews advocate abortion. Simon asks him whether or not the death penalty should be used against a woman who has an abortion, and her physician. Falwell replies that he

has never thought about this before, and that he thinks any action against the woman would be wrong.

Well, there you see it. Mr. Simon knows what the issues really are, but Rev. Falwell is so confused, befuddled, and blind that he cannot see them. Obviously, if abortion is murder, then we have to advocate the death penalty for it! Of course, Falwell here sounds just like most of the rest of the modern anti-abortion movement: They've never even thought about some of the most basic, elementary issues involved. "Abortion is murder," they cry. "Reinstitute the death penalty for murder," says the Moral Majority (Falwell's political group). Anybody with an IQ over 25 can figure out the implications of these two statements, but apparently Falwell has never thought of this before. We live in sorry times, when such an ignorant person is the spokesman for the New Christian Right!

Christian Zionism is blasphemy. It is a heresy. Christians have no theological stake whatsoever in the modern State of Israel. It is an anti-God, anti-Christ nation. Until it repents and says "blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord," it will continue to be under the wrath of God. The modern State of Israel permits the persecution of Christians and Christian missionaries. We must pray that God would change the hearts of Jews, as of all other pagans, to receive Christ. But to support the enemies of the Gospel is not the mark of a Gospel minister, but of an anti-Christ.

I've been pretty hard on Jerry. Somebody needs to be. This kind of thing is inexcusable, and needs to be repented of. A couple of years ago I wrote an essay defending Falwell against a somewhat liberal critic (see Jordan, *The Failure of the American Baptist Culture*, available from Geneva Ministries, 708 Hamvasy, Tyler, TX 75701, for \$9.95). What I have written here does not change what I wrote then, because Falwell's critic was wrong; but I have certainly come to take a dimmer view of Mr. Falwell since. His trumpet is giving forth an uncertain sound. He needs to clean it out.

(For further research: Geneva Ministries published a couple of years ago a study on Israel and the Church, Roderick Campbell's *Israel and the New Covenant*. The price is \$12.95, postpaid. Also, an eleven-tape series on Matthew 24, which deals with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. from a theological viewpoint, and which is most relevant to the subject of the heresy of Christian Zionism, is available from Geneva Ministries for \$35.00. Ask for Jordan's series on Matthew 24. See the enclosed order card for the items mentioned in this essay.)

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# FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER

*January 23, 1912—May 15, 1984*

We join with the Christian world in mourning the passing of Francis A. Schaeffer, Christian missionary, evangelist, and apologist. Schaeffer's L'Abri ministry, begun in Switzerland in 1954, had an incalculable effect on countless lives. Schaeffer's writings and tapes proved an open door to the richness of the Christian intellectual heritage for many who never met him personally. His prophetic denunciations of abortion, his continual affirmations of the inerrancy of Scripture, and his unending warnings against the heresies of Karl Barth earned him the respect of earnest Christians, while exposing the emptiness of all too much modern evangelicalism. His pamphlet on Baptism was a milestone in the thinking of many who struggled with that issue. We could go on, but there is no need. He will be sorely missed.

Francis Schaeffer died of cancer in his lymph system. Years ago, his medical insurance cancelled out on him, and L'Abri ministries had to carry the burden of his medical expenses. Those who wish to help with this may send a contribution to the Francis A. Schaeffer Memorial Fund, with checks made out to L'Abri Fellowship, at 215 15th Ave. SW, Rochester, MN 55901. We urge you to consider sending a gift.