



A D E R E K P R I N C E

TEACHING LETTER

The Root Of Anti-Semitism

No.7

Dear Friend

A Roman Catholic historian has given a brief but vivid summation of 2,300 years of continuous Anti-Semitism:

As the historian of Anti-Semitism looks back over the millennia of horrors he has recorded, an inescapable conclusion emerges: Anti-Semitism is the longest and deepest hatred of human history. Other hatreds may have surpassed it in intensity for a historical moment, but all in their turn have assumed – or presently commence to assume – their proper place in the dustbin of history. What other hatred has endured some twenty-three centuries and survived a genocide of 6,000,000 of its victims in its twenty-third century of existence only to find itself still intact and rich in potential for many more years of life? The very magnitude of the record, seen as a whole, cries out for explanation. How did this amalgam of undying hatred and oppression come to be? What is it essentially? Who or what was responsible for it?¹

The author goes on to offer his own explanation of Anti-Semitism. His remarks are illuminating and helpful, but in my opinion they do not provide an adequate explanation. Over the years I have heard explanations of Anti-Semitism representing a variety of different approaches: theological, philosophical, sociological, economic. But none ever seemed adequate.

In 1946 I discussed this question with my first Hebrew teacher, Mr Ben Zion Segal, who was the secretary of the newly established Hebrew University – located at the time on Mount Scopus, Jerusalem. Mr Segal believed that the problem of Anti-Semitism was basically sociological: the Jews were always an alien minority with a distinctive culture of their own, out of harmony with the culture of the Gentile nations that harboured them. Once the Jews got a state of their own – which happened two years later – this would resolve the basic cause of Anti-Semitism.

To this I replied: “If you are correct that the basic cause of Anti-Semitism is sociological, then the establishment of a Jewish state should go a long way toward resolving the problem. But if – as I believe – the basic cause is spiritual, the establishment of a Jewish state will not resolve the problem, but will intensify it by providing it with one obvious focus: the newly established Jewish state.”

Looking back now over nearly 50 years, I have to say – regretfully – that I believe history has proved me right. The establishment of the State of Israel has merely provided a more “politically correct” name “Anti-Zionism” in place of “Anti-Semitism.” If anything, the virulence has increased.

Although I was right in identifying the basic cause of Anti-Semitism as spiritual, I did not feel I had laid bare the root. Quite recently, however, without any conscious searching on my part, I received two successive flashes of inspiration from the Scriptures which I believe do trace Anti-Semitism to its root.

While I was preaching in our local church in Jerusalem, quite unexpectedly I heard myself say, “Anti-Semitism can be summed up in one word – MESSIAH!”

At that moment I understood that from its beginning Anti-Semitism had one source – Satan – who was motivated by the knowledge that the One who was to be his conqueror, the Messiah, would come through a people that would be specially prepared by God. This people would have one distinctive feature: the Messiah would be able to set an example of obedience to his earthly parents without dishonouring his heavenly Father by any form of idolatry. Moulded by God through many centuries, the Jewish people alone fulfilled this requirement.

Then I saw how, from the birth of Israel as a nation onwards, Satan had unceasingly sought to do two things: to entice them into idolatry, and if that failed, to completely destroy them as a nation. Satan’s attempts to entice Israel into idolatry are a recurring feature of their national history.

History also records two main attempts of Satan to destroy Israel as a nation. In Egypt Pharaoh ordered the murder of all their male babies. If this had been carried through, it would have effectively terminated their existence as a nation. Later, Haman came very close to carrying through a decree for the extermination of all the Jews in the Persian empire – which was in effect all the Jews alive at that time.

In the second century BC Antiochus Epiphane, the dictator of Syria, attempted by force of arms to compel the Jews to renounce their unique destiny as a nation and to merge into the idolatrous culture of the surrounding Greek empire. Only the courageous resistance of the Maccabees foiled his attempt and ensured that a century and a half later there was a Jewish nation to which Jesus could be born as Messiah.

Through His sacrificial death on the cross Jesus fulfilled the purpose for which He came. As the representative of Israel and all nations, He satisfied the requirements of God’s justice on our behalf and thus cancelled all Satan’s claims against us. By this He imposed upon Satan a total, eternal, irrevocable defeat. The full outworking of this defeat, however, will only be consummated at the second coming of Jesus.

Satan, who pays more attention to biblical prophecy than many preachers, is fully aware of all this. Until Jesus returns, Satan knows that he will remain free to continue all his evil activities and to present himself as “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

There is therefore one event which Satan fears more than all others and which he opposes by every means in his power: the return of Jesus in power and glory to establish His kingdom and to banish Satan from the earth. The opposition of Satan to the return of Jesus is the unseen force behind many of the conflicts and pressures in the contemporary world situation.

In His final prophetic discourses in Jerusalem, Jesus pinpointed two events which must precede His return to earth.

In Matthew 24:14 He said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” At the close of His earthly ministry, Jesus gave His disciples an explicit order: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature . . .” (Mark 16:15). “Go and make disciples of all nations . . .” (Matthew 28:19).

Jesus has never cancelled this order. It is still in force. He will not return until His disciples have carried it out. Satan therefore uses every means in his power to divert the church from completing its task. The longer the church delays, the longer Satan retains his liberty.

Just previously, however, in Matthew 23:38–39, Jesus had said to the Jews in Jerusalem, “See, your house [that is, the temple] is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

The way in which the Lord will prepare the hearts of the Jews for this is predicted in Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a first-born.” Notice that the Lord Himself is speaking in the first person, yet He says “Me whom they have pierced.”

The Holy Spirit will move supernaturally on the hearts of the Jewish people to bring a revelation of their Messiah and anguished repentance for having rejected and crucified Him. Notice, however, that this description refers specifically to “the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” The restoration of the Jews to their own land and to the city of Jerusalem is an essential preliminary. Until this takes place, the defeat of Satan will not be finally consummated.

This, then, is the second condition that must be fulfilled before Jesus will return: the Jews must be re-gathered in their own land and in the city of Jerusalem, and their hearts must be prepared to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. Just as surely as Jesus came the first time through the Jews, so surely He will come back the second time to the Jews.

This insight gave me an altogether new understanding of the worldwide furore and confusion concerning the situation here in Israel. What else could explain the almost daily focus of the world media, of the United Nations, and of the world’s most powerful governments upon a tiny strip of land at the east end of the Mediterranean, with a population of five million and an area about the size of the nation of Wales or the state of New Hampshire? There is no normal, political explanation for such a concentration of world forces upon a situation and a people that would normally be considered insignificant.

I also understood in a new light the clear revelation of Joel 3:1–2 that at the close of this age God will judge all nations on the basis of their attitude towards the re-gathering of Israel in their own land:

*“For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,
I will also gather all nations,
And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
And I will enter into judgement with them there
On account of My people, My heritage Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
They have also divided up My land.”*

The implications of these revelations are far-reaching and frightening. Our attitude towards the return of Jesus is revealed by two things: our concern for world evangelisation and our concern for the re-establishment of the Jews in their own land. If we are indifferent towards world evangelisation, we are in fact – whether we acknowledge it or not – indifferent to the return of Jesus.

Probably there are many Christians who would give at least lip service to the urgency of world evangelism, but who are still blind to the significance of the restoration of Israel. Yet both alike are main themes of the prophetic Scriptures and of the words of Jesus Himself.

The issue of Israel's restoration goes much deeper than theology or intellectual understanding. Ultimately it is spiritual. The spirit that opposes the re-establishment of Israel is the spirit that opposes the return of Jesus. Though it may wear many disguises, it is the spirit of Satan himself.

Faced with these clear scriptural issues, we each need to ask ourselves a decisive question: Am I sincerely committed to support by every legitimate means the task of world evangelisation and the re-establishment of Israel as a nation in its own land? The answer we give will reveal our attitude towards the return of Jesus.

Yours in the Master's service



Derek Prince

¹ The Anguish of the Jews by Michael Flannery ©1985, Paulist Press, 997 MacArthur Blvd., Mahwah, NJ 07430,USA.

For further study, we recommend the audio cassette
DP134, "Anti-Semitism Explained In One Word."

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