Chapter II

ISRAEL - IN NEED OF THE PRODIGAL SON’S LOVE

The parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32 is part of an illustrative trilogy that is based upon Jesus Christ’s confrontation with complaining Pharisees and scribes. These Jewish zealots, having audited Jesus’ teaching, “began to grumble, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them’” (Luke 15:1-2). As a result there follows, in response, three parables that all depict the Son of God’s commitment toward the saving of the lost, they being represented by the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son. Obviously Jesus is not only justifying his ministry, but also indicating that both the leaders of Israel, as well as his disciples, should have the same compassionate attitude. Therefore the interpretation of these three parables should be based upon this one underlying theme. When the parable of the Prodigal Son is considered, though it is really concerned with the Lost Sons, two main approaches have been followed. First, there is simply the commendation of God’s fatherly love for a wayward member of His family, His gracious longing for the return of His rebellious son, and His largeness of heart in being quick to forgive in the face of genuine repentance and at the same time joyously celebrate such a conversion. By way of contrast, the elder brother represents that hard heartedness which self-righteousness engenders. He is lacking in God’s tender concern and readiness to forgive. Second, there is the more intriguing understanding of the prodigal son representing the Gentiles who sin with open abandon and the elder brother depicting the Jews’ indignation that such flagrant decadence should receive generous grace while they have been impeccably righteous. This latter view is sympathetically considered by Archbishop Trench in his classic volume, Notes on the Parables of Our Lord, in which he provides a significant concluding application.

[W]e Gentiles must not forget that at the end of the present dispensation all will be reversed, and that we shall be in danger of playing the part of the elder brother, and shall do so if we grudge at the largeness of the grace bestowed upon the Jew, who is now feeding upon husks, far away from his Father’s house.¹

How appropriate is this comment in terms of the attitude of many conservative evangelicals today, especially of Reformed convictions, toward the ethnic Jew and national Israel. The attitude of the elder brother was not only one of contempt for his relative in the flesh, but also he was of the opinion that his brother was beyond redemption and thus permanently cast aside from his father’s home. Certainly the Jews of Jesus’ time were of this opinion with regard to the Gentiles. But how strange it is that today so many Gentile Christians, and hardly any Jewish Christians, are of the opinion that now it is the Jews that are beyond redemption and forever cast aside by the Father in His heaven. On the part of some Gentile Christians, their attitude toward ethnic Jews and national Israel is literally disgraceful. Like the elder brother, they are void of grace and full of condemnation toward their kinsmen in the flesh, even to the degree where their theological anti-Semitism is in danger of becoming ethnic. Some literature in this realm is, to say the least, disgusting and utterly unchristian. Others, less animated and vociferous in this regard, are nevertheless indifferent. There is no compassionate interest in the plight of the Jews, no inward sympathy for their historic tribulations, no admittance of widespread complicity on the part of Christianity with regard to these sufferings, no distinctive interest in Jewish missions, but simply a resignation that the judgment of God is having its course.

¹ Richard Chenevix Trench, Notes on the Parables of Our Lord, p. 152.
A. The admonition of Paul toward the Gentiles in Romans 11:17-21, 31.

In Romans 11 as a whole, certainly the main thrust of the Apostle’s instruction concerning Israel is toward the Gentiles. It is also clear here that the Gentile “wild olive” branches, having been grafted into “the rich root of the olive tree” at the expense of disobedient Israel’s severance, are exhorted that they “do not be arrogant toward the branches” that were “broken off,” namely the “natural branches,” that is the unbelieving Jews. There is to be no pride or arrogance because “[natural Jewish] branches were broken off so that I [as a Gentile] might be grafted in” v. 19. Commentators generally agree that here the Gentiles are encouraged to be compassionate toward the Jews in exile, notwithstanding their entrenched unbelief. But is it possible that such compassionate concern could be constrained by means of doctrine that regards Jewishness and national Judaism as passé? In this regard, history sadly witnesses to the fact that, in general, Gentile Christians have responded with shameful disregard, whether with condescension, aloofness or militant opposition, and the roots of this disregard for the mandate of Romans 11:17-21, 31 are decidedly doctrinal. For contemporary proof of this assertion, refer to Appendix K where Melanie Phillips, a columnist for the London Daily Mail, reports of opposition to Israel being motivated by anti-Semitism that is rooted deep in Christian theology.

B. The amillennial dilemma concerning nominal regard for the Jews.

To begin with, let us make a point of clarification. By amillennial we mean that understanding of the present New Testament age in which the Christian Church has now superceded or replaced the Old Testament people of God, the result being that in the sight of God, there is now no such person as a “Jew” or “Hebrew” with national and geographic identity that has divine recognition. Although there are presently several million “Jews” in Israel, and for practical purposes they are designated as “Jews,” even as we converse with them in America, in theological reality and according to the New Testament revelation, their racial claim has no present heavenly validity. Rather the Christian Church has inherited this past Jewish legacy in a shadowy sense only and thus become the spiritual New Israel. As a consequence every believer in Jesus as the Christ, of whatever nationality, is a spiritual Jew.

1. Exegetical confrontation with Romans 11.

Such is the force of this locus classicus passage with regard to the future of the Israel, that modern commentators are increasingly of the opinion that Romans 11:26 refers to a future conversion of the Jews on a national, or at least a multitudinous scale, and not simply a remnant. In this regard, there has been a turning from Calvin’s understanding here of both saved Jew and Gentile being designated as the “saved Israel.” Yet having said this, at the same time many sense a dilemma that is not so readily clarified. There is often no indication as to whether this en masse conversion of Jews will incorporate divinely acknowledged individual Jewishness, though denial in this regard is often intimated. But further there is a reluctance to admit that such an awakening will be
nationally allied to the inhabitation of the land of Israel. One senses that some scholars, their doctrine excluding the divine recognition of national and territorial Israel in the present or future Christian era, nevertheless feel not only the weight of the plain meaning of the text here, but also the tendency of this truth, regarding an eschatological future conversion of the Jews, to lead, as it were along a slippery slope, toward an eschatological national and territorial recognition that is related to much that the Old Testament has promised. Consequently some attempt to allow a degree of temporary, vague corporateness in a future conversion of the “Jews,” whatever this term may mean, but put the brakes on when national and geographic identity seems to appear on the horizon as an inevitable consequence.

2. The dynamic of witnessing to a “Jew.”

For the classic amillennialist, that is he who places great store in his allegiance to Augustinianism, with regard to the Jew, he faces a significant problem. He is ready to confess his responsibility for proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, even to those who claim national identification as a Jew. The exuberance and priority of Paul in this regard is hard to avoid as a model for contemporary Christians. Hence he will even declare that surely God has His people amongst unbelieving Judaism, and in designating them as the remnant of Romans 11:5, then explain that for this reason there must be evangelism directed toward the “Jews.” However in allowing the identification of resultant new converts as “Jewish” Christians, he will be quick to deny them divine national and territorial recognition. In fact, if pressed, he will confess that this new “Jewish” Christian really has no distinctive Jewishness whatsoever. In other words, he will speak of these converted Jews in individual terms but disallow corporate identity. Within himself he will also believe that the non-Christian Jew has in fact no real Jewishness, even in a carnal sense. Privately he believes that God has abandoned Judaism so as never again to revive it. He is convinced that the contemporary Jew is deceived, but for witnessing purposes, and at a strictly secular level, he ought to be addressed as a “Jew.” However, the question then arises as to what degree, with this attitude in mind, he really has a distinct passion for Jewish missions, even as was the case with Paul (Rom. 9:1-5; 10:1-2), who continued to identify himself as an Israelite (Acts 21:39; 22:3; Rom.11:1; II Cor. 11:22)? In fact, when it comes to a history of distinctive Jewish missions over the last two hundred years, it stands out that agency after agency has always doctrinally presupposed ongoing and eschatological Jewish national, territorial identity according to God’s covenant faithfulness. But where has there been a similar burgeoning of evangelistic outreach toward the Jews based upon that contrasting Augustinian doctrine which upholds Jewishness as a mere shadow that has been superceded by the substance of Christianity? And which of these alternatives mirrors the missionary priority of Paul?

As a representation of this problem with regard to formal expressions of interest in Jewish evangelism, first consider the comments of Marten Woudstra of Calvin Theological Seminary who, in upholding continuity with regard to Israel and the subsequent Christian church, makes a number of comments that are quite representative of amillennial eschatology at this point while at the same time they reflect an essential detachment from divinely acknowledged Jewishness. In consideration of Romans 11:25-26, he concludes that,

the apostle’s emphasis is not upon some later point in time when there will be a reversal in the hardening in part of the Jews. Rather, the emphasis is upon the word “so” or “thus,”
“in this way.” All Israel [the accumulating remnant] will be saved in the way in the bringing in of the fullness of the Gentiles. . . . As the fullness of the Gentiles is brought in and “until” this is finished, so, in this manner, “all Israel” [an accumulating remnant] will be saved. . . . There will be one body of the redeemed, Christ’s flock, known to him by name and distinguished from those who are not his sheep. . . . The saving of “all Israel” is still going on, for the fullness of the Gentiles is also still being brought in. But at all events some of the Jews who are now hardened in part will be grafted into the one olive tree. They will not form a separate program or a separate entity next to the church.

The question whether it is more proper to speak of a replacement of the Jews by the Christian church or of an extension (continuation) of the OT people of God into that of the NT church is variously answered. . . . What should be stated clearly, however, is that the idea of the church replacing Israel is not to be understood as a form of advanced anti-Semitism, as is done by some.

There seems to be an underlying concern in the final comment here that betrays an inherent weakness of the doctrine being proposed. It could never be said that Paul’s teaching in Romans concerning Israel might be misunderstood as having an anti-Semitic tone. Quite to the contrary. Of course what Woudstra fails to make clear is the status of the unbelieving Jew in the present time; one suspects it is not the covenantal regard of Romans 11:28 that inevitably calls for national recognition, even in unbelief. This being the case, any talk concerning Jews is simply with regard to a convenient term that in fact has no divine specificity or authentication. Certainly here the Jew, having become converted, loses all of his Jewishness. Yet at the end of this explanation, we then read of Woudstra making a plea for Jewish evangelism. “The church-and-Israel question presents all evangelicals, regardless of where they stand with respect to any of the above questions, with the challenge to preach the gospel to the Jews.” But is this expression driven according to the same pro-semitic passion of Paul? And further we would suggest that in witnessing to Jews, it is a most vital matter as to whether we tell them of the “good news” that they, in becoming a Christian, will lose their distinct Jewish identity, or whether we direct them to the King of the Jews as “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20). The former approach will not gain much of a hearing, to say the least. However the latter method, far more akin to that of Paul in his missionary visits to innumerable synagogues, is much more likely to result in a respectful audience.

C. The analogy concerning family interest in the unbelieving Jew.

It is common for the Augustinian amillennialist to critically respond that the premillennialist aligns himself with those who, in their “carnal Zionist zeal,” neglect evangelism due to a preoccupation with purely political machinations and prophetic speculation. After all the Jew, in rejecting Christ, is, according to that same Christ, consigned to certain judgment (John 8:24). To this we would thoroughly agree. So the Jew has to be warned concerning the grave danger that confronts his soul, and with this no evangelistic outreach worthy of the qualifying title of “Jewish” would disagree. But how do we do fulfill the burden of this responsibility for Jewish missions? Is it with the constraint of gratitude for the legacy that the Jew represents (Rom. 9:4-5)? Is it with appreciation that the Savior is Jewish? Is it with respect for the truth that the Christian Bible is almost totally Jewish? Or is it with a more dispassionate attitude that includes “Jewishness” as a temporary accommodating appendage

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5 Ibid.
within one’s theology, that at the same time denies the existence of national Judaism and simply anticipates the inclusion of some Jews into the people of God as an accumulating remnant?

By way of illustration, suppose as a Christian we have unbelieving loved ones and family members who we have witnessed to on numerous occasions. Our soul aches with concern for a mother or father or sister or brother who, with stubborn unbelief, does not hesitate to scoff at our faith that is caricatured as a religious crutch. Such reproach within the family circle may persist for many years. Do we likewise believe in this situation that such relatives will “die in their sins” if they believe not that Jesus Christ is their Savior? Yes we do believe this with both love and fear. But how do we continue to relate to these beloved relatives? After such a long time of rejection, is it with eventual abandonment since these kin have become so hard hearted? Having prayed for them, do we then give up on them before God’s throne of grace? No, not for a moment. While we have life in our bodies, such a thought is unthinkable. It is the fact that we are related through the flesh to our loved ones that constrains us to persevere with renewed effort, endeavoring to commend Christ by our gracious lifestyle if our verbal witness continues to be spurned. We never give up because of our love for our brethren according to the flesh. Hence this being true, then what ought to be our attitude toward the Jew to whom, through faith in Christ, we are also related through the flesh (Gal. 3:29)? Surely it ought to be with the same loving persistence. And this never-dying concern is precisely what Paul seems to have in mind in Romans 11:17-19 with regard to the proper attitude of Gentile Christians toward unbelieving Jews. Of course if there is no such thing as a “Jew” today, then there can be no such relationship in the flesh, and thus no resultant merciful interest after the manner of Paul. However the fact that the Apostle exhorts us to have this loving family regard is surely further proof that this ethnic status is not null and void. Rather, it will eventually blossom into a “fullness” of unimagined proportions for the glory of God (Rom. 11:12, 33-36).

D. The analogy concerning Ruth and Orpah.

In Dan Gruber’s significant volume The Church and The Jews, he makes a very telling application from the Ruth 1 in the Old Testament concerning the contrasting attitudes of Ruth and Orpah that illustrate how a Gentile should respond toward the Jews.

Orpah was a loving daughter-in-law, but she ended up staying with her own people. Ruth saw something that Orpah did not see. What did Ruth see in Naomi? Naomi had left the land of Israel with her husband and two sons because there was a famine in the land. They went to Moab, and Naomi’s husband died there. Her two sons married Moabite women, but died soon after that.

In Naomi’s words, “the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me” (Ruth 1:13). When Naomi returned to Bethlehem, “the women said, ‘Is this Naomi?’ And she said to them, ‘Do not call me Naomi [אנה, pleasant]; call me Mara [מָרָא, bitter], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?’” (Ruth 1:19-21).

It was obvious that the Lord was against Naomi. Just like it was obvious that the Lord was against Job. Just like it was obvious that the Lord was against Paul when the viper bit him, shortly after he had escaped from a shipwreck (Acts 28:4). Just like it has been obvious that the Lord is against the Jewish people. Such things are obvious, but they are not true.

Despite what people thought, God was not against Naomi, Job, or Paul. Despite what people think, God is not against the Jewish people. God intends to do something more wonderful for
all Israel than what He did for Naomi, Job, or Paul. Though His hand may sometimes be against His first-born son, His heart never is.

Naomi is a type of the Jewish people. She was bereaved, bitter, and angry at God. She had no hope. In that condition, she came back to her own land. Ruth saw that, but she saw something more. There was something that she had seen in her mother-in-law and in her own husband, that was more precious to her than life. She saw something invisible that Orpah could not see.

“But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God’” (Ruth 1:16). Ruth said, “I will be joined to the Jewish people, and I will serve the God of Israel.” She knew that He, and He alone, is the only God. She made that choice before she ever met Boaz.

Ruth made the same choice that Abraham made. She left her family, her people, and her land behind. She lost her life in order to find it. Orpah said good-bye to Naomi and then went to reclaim her old life. She found her life in order to lose it. Naomi’s Gentile daughter-in-law, Ruth, was to be the means of her greatest blessing. God planned it that way. Ruth embraced the Jewish people, and God blessed her eternally.

What did Cornelius see? He was a military man, and Rome ruled over Jerusalem. Jerusalem itself, as a city of the first-century world, could not compare to “the glory that was Rome.” Cornelius was assigned to a backward, troublesome, superstitious province and people. At least that was the Roman view. They believed that Rome had better ways, more might, and greater gods. What did Cornelius see in Israel that is described in the gospels? He saw everything. He saw the corruption, the legalism, the brutality, and the hypocrisy. But he also saw the invisible hand of God, the only God, upon His people Israel.

Cornelius made a choice which would have made him the laughingstock of all his family, friends, and neighbors back home. He started to pray to the God of Israel, and he started to give his money to help the Jewish people. He made that choice before he ever met Peter. And the angel said, “Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4). Cornelius embraced the Jewish people, and God blessed him eternally. “Now faith is . . . the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Gentiles who are believers need to look at the Jewish people and see the invisible. They need to choose as Ruth and Cornelius did: “Your people will be my people; your God will be my God.”

E. The encouragement of eschatological Jewishness.

From the outset, let it be understood that in this presentation there has been no intent to be boastful with regard to a premillennial defense concerning the ongoing role of the nation of Israel in the mind of God. If necessary, let such a title perish. But this being said, never let perish the biblical indications of God’s sovereign grace that will supremely triumph in the salvation of Israel as a nation through the mediation of its Messiah, Jesus, the Son of God. Israel’s election was according to the purest grace, and so will be the consummate salvation of Israel. However, it continues to remain true in a sizeable part of Reformed Christianity that an eschatological perspective on Israel often results in anti-Semitism of varying shades, even if more kindly defined as theological rather than racial, and progressive rather than the replacement variety. The fact is that some who confess faith in the doctrines of sovereign grace have acted both neglectfully, shamefully with regard to their consideration of and association with Jews and Jewish Christians. Some notable examples have already been cited. And discussion with those of this persuasion usually indicates that such belief is doctrinally driven. It has already been acknowledged that history certainly is strewn with moving exceptions in this regard. Even so, over the centuries, they remain just that,

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6 Dan Gruber, *The Church and The Jews*, pp. 401-402.
exceptions as distinct from the general rule. For this reason, indications of belief in Israel’s everlasting disenfranchisement are not difficult to discern, and those of Jewish extraction find it easy to notice this attitude which, as has been related to this writer, does not commend Christ.

Following the visit of Andrew Bonar, Robert Murray M’Cheyne, Alexander Keith, and Alexander Black to Palestine in 1839 under the auspices of the Church of Scotland, a full account of this investigative journey, concerned with missionary outreach to the Jews, was published entitled, *A Narrative of a Visit to the Holy Land*. Of particular significance are the following extracts that indicate the deplorable attitude of “Christians” towards Jews in Jerusalem at that time.

On another occasion, passing by the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the monks mistaking him [a Mr. Nicolayson, a Christian resident in Jerusalem dressed in an eastern manner] for a Jew, rushed out upon him, and pursued him through the streets, into a house where he took refuge, threatening to kill him, unless he kissed a picture of the Virgin, in a New Testament which they held out to him. This he did, and saved his life.

The professing Christians here [in the Holy Land]—Greeks, Armenians, and Roman Catholics—are even more bitter enemies to Jews than Mahometans; so that in time of danger, a Jew would betake himself to the house of a Turk for refuge, in preference to that of a Christian. How little have these Christians the mind of Christ!

How shameful this is, not only because of the way this behavior is so antithetical to that of the Apostle Paul, but supremely because of the way in which Jesus Christ is unnecessarily blasphemed before His brethren in the flesh. The *Narrative* goes on to describe that when the Jews recognized the more genuine loving interest of the delegation from Scotland, there was a contrasting response of desire for cordial fellowship. It also needs to be pointed out that the eschatological doctrine of this delegation, in the main, recognized the ongoing national and geographic status of the Jews at that time, notwithstanding their unbelief.

As was stated in the introduction of this volume, in the field of eschatology there are matters of relatively lesser significance that concern the antichrist, the great tribulation, the rapture, etc., and then this transcendentally important issue of the place of Israel in the Bible, and especially the New Testament. With regard to this matter of national Israel’s present existence or nonexistence, history plainly leads us to an unavoidable conclusion. It is that profound and most practical consequences are involved, even issues of life and death. It is for this reason, amongst others, that this author has felt compelled not only to make such a vital distinction at this point, but also vigorously defend that doctrine which tends to rectify such an appalling heritage. Here we are not dealing with an eschatological refinement concerning which we can agree to disagree. If the Christian Church in general, over the centuries, had followed Paul’s exhortation in Romans 11:17-24, it is not unreasonable to conceive that the tragic treatment of the Jews during the twentieth century that resulted in ashes might have been replaced with the fruit of a great harvest of Jewish souls saved, provoked to jealousy (Rom. 11:11, to the glory of God (Rom. 11:36).

Wake, harp of Zion, wake again,
Upon thine ancient hill,
On Jordan’s long deserted plain,
By Kedron’s lowly rill.

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Andrew A. Bonar and Robert Murray M’Cheyne, *A Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland*, pp. 146-147, 149.
The hymn shall yet in Zion swell
That sounds Messiah’s praise,
And Thy loved name, Immanuel!
As once in ancient days.

For Israel yet shall own her King,
For her salvation waits,
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing
With praise in all her gates.

Hasten, O Lord, these promised days,
When Israel shall rejoice;
And Jew and Gentile join in praise,
With one united voice.

*James Edmeston, 1846*

F. The exhortation of Horatius Bonar, “The Responsibilities Of Christians As Regards The Jews.”

The complete contrast between a holy God and fallen man has been abundantly and fearfully displayed in all ages. The false religions which have cursed the world under the forms of Heathenism and Mohammedanism, and those miserable perversions of true religion, Rabbinism among the Jews, and Popery among Christians, have served to present man as the moral antipodes of the Deity. The result has been, that man has magnified and adored those things which God has ever depreciated and forbidden, while he has undervalued and despised whatever Jehovah has testified to, and highly commended.

The gospel, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, wins man back into sympathy with God. Thus it is the power of God unto salvation. It endows the mind with God-like tastes, and fills the heart with holy aspirations and desires. But this work is not wrought all at once. It admits of degrees, and is capable of continual increase. Our sympathy with God will be in proportion to the light which we obtain, and our honest use of that light. Many Christians fail in important duties, because they have not studied the whole of God’s statute-book. Their minds are but partially illuminated, and so their hearts are not found in all God’s ways of service, nor in all God’s thoughts of coming glory.

There was a time, when, there was much religion in our beloved land [Scotland], much zeal for God’s truth and glory, there was no concern for the millions of heathens who were living without God and without hope in the world. The people ate the fat, and drank the sweet, but sent no portion to the perishing. “Go ye out into the highways and hedges” [Luke 14:23], “Preach the gospel to every creature” [Mark 16:15], were become obsolete statutes to the professing Churches which were the offspring of the Reformation. But this state of things greatly changed about fifty years ago. The Church awoke from her slumbers, went forth on her mission, and, as of old, the Lord “worked with his servants,” and confirmed his word by signs following. This was a step in advance as regards sympathy with the Savior; for we should imitate him not only in love to truth, mercy, and holiness, but also in zeal for spreading them, and in intense longing for the salvation of souls.

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But while the noble missionaries went forth on their noble embassy to the nations sitting in darkness, in the highway of those nations through which they passed, and even close by where they labored, lay the poor neglected Jew, torn and bleeding at every pore, trodden down and despised, a proverb and a byword. And who cared for him? These despised ones “were taken up on the lips of talkers, and were an infamy of the people” (Ezek. 36:3). “Man called the scattered and peeled nation” an outcast, saying, “There is Zion whom no man seeketh after” (Jer. 30:17). But “God had not cast away his people whom he foreknew” [Rom. 11:2]; he had still wondrous thoughts of lingering love towards them, and it was a sight well-pleasing in his eyes, when, in the spirit of the Samaritan, the Church directed her steps towards the plundered and wounded traveler, and sought to “pour oil and wine into his bleeding wounds.” Surely those societies which seek the spiritual and eternal welfare of the scattered and long-injured children of Abraham richly deserve the name of “Good Samaritan Societies;” and surely all Christians who look on the efforts now making, would do well to give heed to the application which the Great Teacher and Pattern of Love makes of his own beautiful parable, “Go thou and do likewise.” Yes, Christian; if you would be in full sympathy with God, you must not only trust the cross, love holiness, and send the gospel to the heathen; but you must love the Jew, pity and pray for the Jew, and be willing to lay out property and energy to send the good tidings that Jesus of Nazareth “came into the world to save sinners” [I Tim. 1:15], to the Jew, to he came “preaching peace” [Acts 10:36].

With a view of awakening a right state of feeling, and inducing a right course of action towards the lost sheep of the house of Israel, let the reader look earnestly at the scene presented before him by their history and present condition; and then look up to that redeeming Lord who was of “the seed of Abraham according to the flesh,” and ask, with reference to them, Lord! “what wilt thou have me to do?”

The people of Israel present a most interesting subject for contemplation, and a large sphere for labor. Do you want an important theme to think upon? Here it is. Do you want a field in which to work? Behold it here. Surely no one who thinks on the past history of the Jews, or their present condition or future destiny, can complain of lack of interest in the subject before them. In the Jews we see a people by whom the Bible was written, and to whom, either as history or prophecy, a large part of it refers. These are the fathers, the prophets, and the types; from them came the Savior and his apostles. The lovers of antiquity, the admirers of the marvelous, the expectants of wonders, may all come here and not fear disappointment. Here there is much revealed that is most valuable; and two things, above all others in importance, may be learned by studying the history and prophecies of this wonderful nation; these are, the knowledge of God, and of ourselves. Yes, the Divine character and the human heart may be both traced in the past, the present, and the future of the Jew.

To know God is the great point in theology, for “it is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). The person and character of Christ makes the grandest discovery of God. Next to Him who is “the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of his person” [Heb. 1:3], the salvation and history of the Church, or of sinners saved by the wondrous grace of a Triune God, affords the noblest subject for study, and the best facilities for acquaintance with God. If called upon to mention the next field for studying God, we should name the Jewish nation. Here God hath written out his glorious name. In them we see every divine perfection in act and operation. Omnipotence raised them up at first. Then countless multitudes sprang from a dead stock. Wisdom watched over, led, and guided them unerringly. Faithfulness fulfilled every promise
uttered by the lip of Truth. **Goodness** established them in a noble land, gave them holy laws, divine and instructive institutions, sent among them prophets to teach and priests to minister. **Holiness** warned, cautioned, and exhorted them, and when they rebelliously spurned the gentle tones of love, how long did **Patience** bear with them; how often did God return and have mercy on them! When they had sinned “till there was no more remedy,” when they had consummated the rebellions of fifteen hundred years by that unparalleled deed of blood, the murder of the Son of God, then, after some yet further lingerings and invitations of insulted Mercy, did awful **Justice** arise, bared his arm for the battle, and dealt down the terrible and crushing blows. Now, in what state do we behold them? Even as they have been for the last eighteen hundred years, like a burnt mountain on the plains of Time, scorched and splintered by the lightnings of divine wrath. As one tremblingly sings:—

Salted with fire, they seem to show  
How spirits lost in endless woe  
May undecaying live.

Yes! still preserved in all their woe, still unconsumed by all these penal fires! Preserved! And for what? Let a thousand glorious prophecies answer! That burn mountain shall yet be clothed with lovely foliage; down its sides shall streams of living water gush; and the nation that now witnesses to the **truth**, **justice**, and **power** of God, shall sing till the ends of the earth shall hear and echo beck the song, “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage? He retained not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy” (Mic. 7:18). Then shall the Lord be glorified in Israel, and all his attributes displayed in full-orbed glory, when he shall “call her Hephzi-bah, and her land Beulah” [Isa. 62:4]. What a glorious Jehovah is the Lord God of Israel! With what awe, what love, what fear, what hope, should this character, as exhibited towards Israel, inspire us!

And the poet sang truly, who, looking at Israel and their history said—

Here in a glass our hearts may see  
How fickle and how false they be!

The reader need not be reminded of the use which the apostle makes of their history in Hebrew 3 and 4, and I Corinthians 10:1-13, and Romans 11. We can only quote some of his solemn applications. “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” “Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear.”

How great, then, are our obligations to a nation, from whose history we learn so much of God, and so much of ourselves! They encourage us to hope in God, they warn us against tempting him. Their very failure is for our profit; “through their fall, salvation has come to us.” We have been “made partakers of their spiritual things,” and have been grafted into the good olive tree,” from which, for a time, they are broken off. Surely we are responsible, as regards the Jew, to a very large amount. Have we felt this? Have we so acted as to show that, like the apostle, we feel that “we are debtors?” Do our prayers on their behalf prove this? Are they not too much forgotten, both in public and private, by many of God’s people? Although something has been done, yet, if we consider the present sad and oppressed condition of Israel, especially in Russia, if we think anything of their anguish of soul, and cruel bondage, we must feel that we are “verily guilty concerning our brethren.” Israel’s past
we cannot remedy; their future, as a nation, is with God, and is safe in his omnipotent and faithful hands; but let men say or think as they will, their present is with us; God in a measure casts it upon us, and bids us care for their souls. He will not interfere during this dispensation in any miraculous way, but he will work by the means which he has put in our hands, and will be pleased if these means are used diligently in faith, and with prayer.

Israel has been a long time neglected, persecuted, and grievously wronged; let us go, like Jeremiah, and sit down with them amidst their ruins, and in a sympathetic spirit tell them of the Restorer of Israel—the Almighty Repairer of the great breach—the true Antitype of their own Zerubbabel, who can yet build them up “an holy temple, an habitation of God through the Spirit.” While we mourn over their great griefs, their mighty wrongs, and their yet mightier sins, let us gently tell them of “the Man of sorrows,” who is the all-sufficient “consolation of Israel.” We carry God’s own message, prepared by the hand of mercy for the heart of the miserable, and which can, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, win its way through a mountain of stone and a heart of adamantine [stubbornly resolute] hardness. Go, Christian, to thy wandering and fugitive brother, tell him of Blood “which speaketh better things than that of Abe” [Heb. 12:24]—Blood which can cleanse even those who have “gone in the way of Cain” [Jude 11]. Go, in the spirit of Paul, “with our hearts desire and prayer to God, that Israel may be saved” [Rom. 10:1]. Go, “praying in the Holy Spirit” [Jude 20]; and you will give no heed to those who say that “it is of no use preaching the gospel to the Jew. It is of use; facts abundantly prove it; God hath owned his own word, and is still blessing his servants. “Many of the children of Israel have been turned to the Lord their God” [Luke 1:16]; several of them are now the ministers of Christ to the Gentiles or to their own countrymen; and “how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them who preach the gospel of peace!” But “how shall they preach except they be sent” [Rom. 10:15]; and to send them, means are required; and surely all pardoned Gentile sinners should aid according to their ability in furnishing these means. Who, then, is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? To liberality, prayer must be added. When messengers are sent, fervent supplications must be offered continually for them, that God would give his word free course, and greatly glorify it. Surely we should stir up ourselves to take hold on God’s name, and cry out for the “arm of the Lord to awake, as in the ancient days, as in the generations of old” [Isa. 51:9]. We should pray earnestly for Israel’s final restoration, even for her national glory and spiritual salvation. In so doing we pray for the blessedness of the earth, and the life of the world, which God has connected therewith. But believing that God has at the present time “a remnant according to the election of grace” [Rom. 11:5], we should give, pray, and labor, “if by any means we may save some” [Rom. 11:14]. Nor should we forget to lay the letter of their complaint before the Lord, as regards the oppression of man. Who can think of 2,300,000 Jews under the iron despotism of Russia, without feeling their hearts moved to cry for God to come to their help against the mighty, and to work deliverance for the oppressed?

Their “future!” Ah! There is a dark cloud resting over the years that are fast hanging on; but beyond, what brightness! What glory! and both prompt to prayer. Prophecy tells us of a faithful praying remnant during the coming troubles, and reveals, beyond the fiery trials, “a nation born in a day” [Isa. 66:8], and that nation “the perfection of beauty” [Ps. 50:2], “the praise of the earth” [Jer. 49:25], “the dew from the Lord” [Mic. 5:7], “life from the dead” [Rom. 11:15]; and all their faithfulness in trial, and their national glory, may be God’s answer to the prayers of those “who take pleasure in the stones of Zion, and favor the dust thereof” [Ps. 102:14].
Compassion for Israel must be well pleasing to God. To feel and to manifest this, is to be like Him whose first words on the cross of agony were a prayer for the Jews, and whose final words on earth, just before he went to glory, were a command respecting them. With “Father, forgive them, for they know no what they do,” and “Beginning at Jerusalem,” ever resounding in our ears, we surely cannot be indifferent to the spiritual welfare of a people so useful to ourselves, so dear to God, and with whose future blessedness the full salvation of a ruined world is connected. “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!” [Rom. 11:26]. Soon may the day dawn, when Israel, brought through her great tribulation, shall as the priestly nation breathe for the acceptable prayer, “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy name may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him” (Ps. 67:1-2, 7).