

THE HOPE OF A FUTURE REDEMPTION FOR ETHNIC ISRAEL IS NO NOVELTY

The “catholic” Hope of a Future Redemption for Ethnic Israel

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“Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Nations”

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Introduction

Dispensationalism is no longer cool, if it ever was. Growing up during the so-called “Young, Restless, and Reformed,” movement, most of my generation grew accustomed to being seen as border-line heretical for being a dispensationalist, even if we did embrace to some degree the “doctrines of grace.” For some, being ostracized by the Reformed superstars was simply too much, and they left dispensationalism for what seemed to them greener pastures. Even though dispensationalism had plenty of pastors throughout its history that espoused one degree or another of “Reformed” soteriology, dispensationalism was *persona non grata* among the “Reformed,” which was increasingly portrayed as one, unified, historic, disciplined theological system.

Of late, things have gotten worse. When on October 7, 2023, Hamas invaded and attacked the modern Israel, the United States became involved with the defense of its historic ally Israel. Though the Left has always had antisemitic elements, this conflict drew the ire of some on the right. Since then, renewed criticism of Zionism, and, for our purposes, dispensationalism has come back to the foreground. Dispensationalists have found themselves besieged, not only from the ongoing mockery of theological opponents, but also currently from voices on the right.

In the broader culture, on the “New Right,” one often gets impression that dispensationalist views (which are usually conflated with all varieties of Zionism) are heresy.¹ In an interview with the American filmmaker Nathan Apffel, Tucker Carlson asked where Christian Zionism comes from.² Apffel blamed Christian Zionism on dispensationalism, which is “a very new thing” from “a guy named Darby” and “The Scofield Reference Bible.” Apffel continued, “So dispensationalism is the twelve tribes of

¹ For a definition of Zionism, see below.

² “Who are God’s Chosen People? Full Explanation in 15 Minutes,” Tucker Carlson Network, April 8, 2026, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quOYjDU4IT4>. Apffel asserted, “I would say most Christians, especially dispensationalist or Zionist Christians, are Talmudic Jews wrapped in Christianity.” For more on Nathan Apffel, see <https://www.thereligionbusiness.com/about>.

Israel still deserve this land ... and don't need Jesus." Other guests have made similar assertions.³ Candace Owens has also spoken of the "dispensationalist heresy."⁴

Some religious nationalist and white supremacist voices are making similar assertions. Christian Nationalist Pastor Joel Webbon explicitly rejects that there will be a revival among the Jews. The Church and Christendom is the "life from the dead" that Ezekiel and Paul prophesied. In AD 70, God took the vineyard away from the Jews. "It's over."⁵ Webbon continues, "And to pretend that it [God's Jewish program] somehow's still continuing with a Polish guy ... named Netanyahu 1950 years removed, with Ashkenazy Jews—it's silly, it's dumb." Anti-Jew tropes and conspiracy themes run through this new anti-dispensationalist animus.

With these attacks on dispensationalism, it's alleged that Christians have always held that God is done with the Jews. Dispensationalism's belief about the Jews is completely new and so should be rejected out of hand.

My main burden today is not to defend Zionism *per se* or even dispensationalism. Instead, I want to show a much more modest proposal, that the hope for a future redemption of ethnic Israel is not novel. Along the way, I will show that there is even solid precedent for forms of eschatological Zionism where God will still restore the Jews to the land.

The word *Israel* can refer to several different things: a name for the patriarch Jacob, the Northern Kingdom, the ancient nation of Israel, the ethnic descendants of Abraham and Jacob or the modern state of Israel.⁶ Unless otherwise noted, by Israel I mean the ethnic descendants of Abraham and Jacob.

Since it will come up, Zionism also can be used a variety of ways. All Zionists hold that some Jews in some manner should be in the Promised Land. Doug Wilson has distinguished between Jewish Zionists (the 18th century Jewish movement), "Christian Zionists" (including dispensationalists who believe that the return to the land in 1948 fulfilled prophecy), and "*De facto* Zionists" (the nation of Israel has the right to defend itself).⁷ To this I would add **Eschatological Zionists**, who likely allow that the modern

³ Appearing on Tucker Carlson's channel, Fares Abraham told Carlson, "God is done with the Jews." Fares described Christian Zionism to be "a theopolitical movement that says that God has two distinct people with two distinct plans and two distinct covenants." Abraham alleged that Christian Zionism "has replaced Jesus with the current state of Israel." An incredulous Tucker replied, "Obviously. That's why I think it's heresy." "Christian Zionism Fully Explained by Palestinian Christian," Tucker Carlson Network, May 4, 2026, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqFyeSGinEU>.

⁴ "The Bible Doesn't Command Us to Support Israel," Candace Owens, June 19, 2025, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hdk7WjE1Fno>.

⁵ Right Response, "Who is the True Israel | Revelation 12:2-8," YouTube, Jan 29, 2026, 31:57, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f45fDd3ahSg>

⁶ Compare J. C. Ryle, *Coming Events and Present Duties. Being Miscellaneous Sermons on Prophetic Subjects* (London: William Hunt, 1879), 125. As for "Israel" in terms of "the whole Jewish nations, all the members of the twelve tribes," Ryle says, "This is the only signification in which I can find the word 'Israel' used throughout the whole New Testament." Also see Kevin T. Bauder, "Israel, Palestinian Arabs, and Christian Attitudes," *Frontline* 36:2 (March/April 2026): 18-19.

⁷ "Israel, Me, Team Candace, and the Turning Point Aftermath," *Blog and Mablog*, Dec 22 2025, <https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/tpusa-aftermath.html> Thomas D. Ice defined "Zionism is simply the belief that the Jewish people have been given the land of Israel by covenant promise to God and have a current right to occupy that land. Christian Zionists are Christians who agree with this belief." "Loves of Zion: A History of Christian Zionism" (2009) Article Archives 29:1. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/pretrib_arch/29

state of Israel to defend their borders justly and, much more importantly, that hope that God will regather the eschatological nation of redeemed Israel to their land in the Millennium.

I assume that dispensationalists hold to a future mass conversion of ethnic Israel to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Most of us in this room, including me, would want to add that the kingdom and the land are among the promises that Christ will grant his people in his earthly reign. Yet what I want to show is that this particular question of Israel's future redemption is not unique to dispensationalists. It is no novelty and it is definitely not a heresy. Further, there are even many orthodox nondispensationalists who hold to some kind of Zionism.

Briefly, here is an overview of the positions.

- **Strict Supersessionists believe that Christ and the Church have spiritually fulfilled all God's promises to [i.e., replaced] Israel. Therefore, there is no future redemption for ethnic Israel.** God has chosen to fulfill his original promises to Abraham in a greater way than he literally expressed them. Now all God's old covenant promises have been fulfilled in Christ, who *is* Israel, and in Christ's body, the church. So when Paul said in Rom. 11, "All Israel will be saved," he is referring either to the church as a new Israel (Gal. 6:16) or believing Jews throughout history. Proponents of strict supersessionism include Martin Luther (sometimes), John Calvin, Francis Pieper, Karl Barth, O. Palmer Robertson, N. T. Wright, Kevin DeYoung, and "New Right" voices like Joel Webbon and Matt Fradd.⁸
- **Moderate Supersessionists believe that Christ and the Church have spiritually fulfilled all God's promises to Israel yet affirm a future redemption for Israel.** A moderate supersessionist may or may not be a Zionist. They espouse several different millennial eschatologies, such as amillennialism as well as conservative postmillennialism and historic premillennialism. We will consider many such voices below.
- **Non-Supersessionists believe that the Church is not Israel and that God will still fulfill his promises to Israel, including a future redemption of ethnic Israel.**⁹

⁸ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. J. Theodore Mueller (1954; repr. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1976), 161–62, with editor's note on p. 162; John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans. Ross Mackenzie, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 255 and *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.21.6; Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1953), 3:527–534; Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (New York: Oxford, 1968), 416; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2000), 180; N. T. Wright, "Jerusalem in the New Testament," accessed May 14, 2026, <https://ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/Jerusalem%20in%20the%20NT.pdf>; Kevin DeYoung, *Daily Doctrine: A One-Year Guide to Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024), 158–59, 365–66; and Matt Fradd, "Why Ted Cruz Is Wrong About Christian Zionism." Daily Wire. March 19, 2026. <https://www.dailywire.com/news/why-ted-cruz-is-wrong-about-christian-zionism>. Accessed May 16, 2026. Michael J. Vlach argues that Calvin (despite his comments on Rom. 11:26 in his commentary on Romans) possibly held out for Jewish salvation. *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Brentwood, TN: B&H, 2010), 57–59.

⁹ The most difficult burden is on those who take the promises of Jewish redemption literally but then take every other promise spiritually for the Church. Andrew Bonar argued that this view was the most consistent position. Noting the widespread belief of the restoration of the Jews in his own day, Bonar added, "There are persons who deny the restoration of Israel, simply for this

As our critics attack any and all support and love for ethnic Israel, as the shrill antisemitic voices on the Left and Right rant, it is good to be reminded of the broad support of our biblical position throughout church history. The hope of a future salvation for ethnic Israel has a very broad—even “small c” catholic—pedigree. Moreover, I will show the Zionist concern among Christians always enjoys diverse and historic pedigree, especially since early Post-Reformation times.

Toward this end, I will begin with a brief summary of biblical support for the future redemption of ethnic Israel. Then I will turn to survey the myriad of “voices” lending support for ethnic Israel throughout church history, first in the patristic and medieval era, then in the Post-Reformation era. I will conclude with three great “Reformed” proponents of both the future conversion of ethnic Israel and Christ’s regathering of Israel to her land.

The Biblical Case for a Future Redemption for Ethnic Israel

Both Old and New Testaments foretell that a day of salvation is coming for ethnic Israel. In Romans, Paul says of ethnic Israel, “his kinsmen according to the flesh,” that “to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving the law, the worship, and the promises” (Rom. 9:3–4). Paul’s concern for Israel was rooted not simply in his biological relation, but in the working of God in history and the promises of God.

Ezekiel 36:24–28 foretold both a conversion and a literal restoration.

²⁴ I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. ²⁸ You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

This salvation is distinct from the nations *that are left*: Ezek. 36:35–36

And they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’ ³⁶ Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the LORD; I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.

Zechariah the prophet also foretold a day when God would restore Israel. He himself wrote of this great conversion after Jeremiah’s 70 years were complete (Jer.

reason, that, if they admit it, then they must admit a great number of other things to be literal, which they think are abhorrent to the genius of the Christian dispensation. Not so, however, ... with very many who admit the return of Israel. They frankly hold that truth; but there they stop. There is mist over the rest of the ground. Anything literal beyond that they very much doubt. *Ezekiel’s temple is one of these obscurities.*” Andrew A. Bonar, *Redemption Draweth Night: A Defence of the Premillennial Advent* (London: James Nisbet, 1847), 98–99.

25:11–12), showing that God’s future restoration was distinct from the initial restoration of the remnant exiles to Jerusalem. God will do this through the Spirit of Christ:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn ... On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness (Zech. 12:10, 13:1).

There are many other similar prophecies in the Old Testament. It was in defense of the promises made by God in holy Scripture that Paul rose in Rom. 9–11 to defend the justice of God in present hardening the Jews. God will assuredly keep his promises, even though God has brought upon Israel a “partial hardening” (Rom. 11:25). When “the fulness of the Gentiles has come in,” then “all Israel will be saved.”¹⁰ The ground of this hope is in the unfailing word of God: “for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29).

Voices Affirming a Future Redemption for Ethnic Israel

We turn now to the voices in church history. This hope for ethnic Israel can be legitimately called “catholic” or universal. But at the outset, it would be good recognize that it is also actually Catholic. The Roman Church arguably hold out hope for a future redemption of ethnic Israel. Though Catholicism certainly believes that the Church has replaced Israel, its official catechism is moderate supercessionist. “The ‘full inclusion’ of the Jews in the Messiah’s salvation, in the wake of ‘the full number of the Gentiles,’ will enable the People of God to achieve ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.’”¹¹ The hope of a future redemption for ethnic Israel is “Catholic.”

Patristic and Medieval Voices

Many church historians have argued that the church fathers nearly universally accepted some sort of supercessionist view that the Church replaced Israel in God’s program, with little to no hope for Israel’s salvation. For example, Larry Pettigrew has argued that this replacement theology prevented premillennial church fathers (of whom there were many) from pretribulationism.¹² William Watson makes it sound like precious few held out hope for Israel from the second century to the Reformation.¹³

¹⁰ Ryan J. Martin, “The Church, Israel, and Supercessionism,” in *Dispensationalism Revisited: A Twenty-First Century Restatement* (Plymouth, MN: Central Seminary Press, 2023), 196–232.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), §674 (176). See Gregg R. Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology & Practice: An Evangelical Assessment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 152. Compare <https://www.catholicsforisrael.com/>

¹² Larry D. Pettigrew, “Israel in the Church Fathers,” in *Dispensationalism Revisited*, 138–67. Compare Thomas D. Ice, “Lovers of Zion: A History of Christian Zionism,” (2009), Article Archives 29:2. https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/pretrib_arch/29

¹³ William C. Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby: Seventeenth-Century and Eighteenth-Century English Apocalypticism* (Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2015), 13. Compare David W. Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), s.v. “Jew, Jews,” 378–79.

Michael J. Svigel, however, has argued that a future redemption of Israel can be found in a few different Christian authors.¹⁴ Michael Vlach cites examples from several church fathers, including Origen, Jerome, and Ambrose.¹⁵

For example, Irenaeus of Lyons writes in *Against Heresies*, apparently believed that Jer. 8:16 foretold that the Antichrist would come from the tribe of Dan. Irenaeus adds, “This, too, is the reason that this tribe is not reckoned in the Apocalypse along with those which are saved” (*Haer.* 5.30.2). Irenaeus referred to Rev. 7 where the Apostle John lists the Hebrew tribes of the saved 144,000, famously excluding Dan. Say what you will about Irenaeus’s view of the origins of Antichrist, he apparently held hope that during the time described in Revelation, ethnic Israel would be converted.¹⁶

Justin Martyr, though he taught that the Church replaced Israel, quoted many Old Testament prophecies to Trypho the Jew, arguing that, when Christ returns in his second advent, that “your people shall see and recognize him whom they have crucified, as Hosea, one of the twelve prophets, and Daniel have predicted” (*Dial.* 14.8).¹⁷

Though his voluminous writings lead to ambiguity to his position, even the premillennialist-turned-father-of-amillennialism Augustine of Hippo held out hope for the redemption of Israel.¹⁸ In *City of God*, Augustine wrote, “It is a familiar theme in the conversation and heart of the faithful, that in the last days before the judgment the Jew shall believe in the true Christ, that is, our Christ” (*Civ.* 20.29).¹⁹ Though all unbelieving Jews in history will remain condemned for their unbelief, a future generation of Jews, who will be converted by a future Elijah. They will see Christ in his majesty at his second coming will “receive the spirit of mercy and grace [citing Zech. 12:9–10], and believe” (*Civ.* 20.30).

Scholars have also argued that Thomas Aquinas interpreted Rom. 11:26 to be a still future event where ethnic Jews would come to faith in Christ.²⁰ In his commentary on Romans, Aquinas wrote, “The blindness of the Jews will last up to the time when the full number of the Gentiles will come to the faith. With this agrees his next statement, namely, *and then*, i.e., when the full number of the Gentiles has come in, *all Israel will be saved*, not some, as now, but universally all.”²¹

¹⁴ Michael J. Svigel, “Go Deeper Excursus 21: The Future Restoration of Israel in the Early Church,”

¹⁵ Vlach, *Has the Church*, 42–50. Also see Jeremy Cohen, “The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation: Romans 11:25–26 in Patristic and Medieval Exegesis,” *Harvard Theological Review* 98:3 (2005): 247–81; and Denis Fahey, *The Kingship of Christ and the Conversion of the Jewish Nation* (Kimmage, Dublin: Regina Publications, 1953), 107–109.

¹⁶ See Svigel, “Excursus 21,” 5–6. Svigel asserts, “Irenaeus envisioned a future salvation for a regathered Israel.” *Ibid.*, 5. Among the proponents of the future salvation of ethnic Israel Svigel includes *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Tertullian of Carthage, and even Justin Martyr.

¹⁷ *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, trans. Thomas B. Falls; ed. Michael Slusser (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2003), 25. Also see Charles Hauser, “The Eschatology of the Early Church Fathers,” (Ph.D. diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1961), 112–13.

¹⁸ Reginald Mary Chua notes the contrary positions of Augustine in “Aquinas and Romans 11:26,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 13:2 (2019):168–185.

¹⁹ Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 757. See Vlach, *Has the Church*, 45.

²⁰ See Chua, “Aquinas and Romans 11:26”; Vlach, *Has the Church*, 52–53.

²¹ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Lectures on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Fabian Larcher, ed. Jeremy Holmes (2021), 455.
<https://archive.org/details/lectures-on-the-letter-to-the-romans-by-saint-thomas-aquinas-translated-by-fabian-larcher/mode/2up>

The hope of a future salvation of ethnic Israel was often muted in the patristic and medieval eras of the church because of the heated rivalry between Jews and Christians. Lamentably, outright antisemitism often tainted popular Christian attitudes and official government policies during these years. The oft-repeated idea that the church was a new Israel obscured the actual hope that Scriptures held out for the ethnic children of Jacob. Yet, it was not uncommon for theologians to hold out such hope from Scripture.

Post-Reformation and Puritan Voices

Among the first generation of Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin were among those who seemed to hold a “Strict Supersessionism.” But something extraordinary happened in the second generation. After Mary Tudor came to the English throne in 1533, some Protestant exiles settled in Geneva. These converts were influenced by younger Reformers such as Theodore Beza. Geneva became a hub of biblical scholarship, culminating in the 1560 publication of what today is called the Geneva Bible, an English translation of the Scriptures with explanatory notes.²² Murray records, “One of the first developments in thought on prophecy came as further attention was given to the scripture bearing on the future of the Jews.”²³ The Geneva Bible’s note at Rom. 11:26 (“And so all Israel shall be saved...”) read, “He sheweth that the time shall come that the whole nation of ye Jewes though not euery one particularly, shall be ioyned to the Church of Christ.”

What is clear is that after this time, the hope of a future redemption of ethnic Israel spread broadly among English-speaking Protestants. William Watson, Nahum Sokolow, and Iain Murray attribute this development to the rise of the English Bible.²⁴ Peter Martyr’s carefully exegeted English *Commentary upon Romans* published in London in 1568 influenced a rising generation of Protestant scholars.²⁵ The Bible’s teaching gave these men with real hope in the power of God to save.

The Reformed concern for the Jews was not merely theoretical. It led to missionary work in the holy land, the study of Hebrew, the translation of the Scriptures into modern English, and, a century later, Oliver Cromwell’s government reversing the centuries’ old edict expelling the Jews from Great Britain.²⁶

²² Lloyd E. Berry, “Introduction to the Facsimile Edition,” *The Geneva Bible: a facsimile of the 1560 edition* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 4–7.

²³ Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2017), 42.

²⁴ William Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby*, 13; Nahum Sokolow, *History of Zionism 1600–1918* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1919), 53; Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 39–56. Sokolow connects this hope in the conversion of the Jewish people to an increasing interest in Zionism: “The view held by many Christians, especially in England, was that the Israelitish race, now scattered over the face of the earth, would eventually be brought back to its own land. To this was generally added the belief that the Jews would return in a converted, *i.e.* Christian, state. In conformity with the general spirit of the period, all these ideas had a religious colouring in the minds both of English theologians and writers and of the Jews themselves.” *History*, 53.

²⁵ Martyr wrote, “all Israell is to be taken for a greate number of the Hebrues amongst whome Christe shoulde be publikelye acknowledged.” *Commentaries of D. Peter Martir Vermilius* (London, 1568), 360. In the digital collection Early English Books Online 2. <https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A14353.0001.001>. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. Accessed May 16, 2026. 360. Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 42.

²⁶ Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 42. In 1290 Edward I issued the Edict of Expulsion, making it illegal for unconverted Jews to live in England. The English came to believe that they had replaced Israel as God’s chosen people. It was Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans who in 1656 allowed the Jews to resettle in England. Puritan pastors and theologians had genuine affection for the Jews with the

Many English Puritans and Protestants, including William Perkins and Richard Sibbes, advocated for the conversion of the Jews in accordance with Scripture. One notable example is Sir Henry Finch (d. 1625), who served as a member of Parliament.²⁷ In 1621, Finch's *The World's Great Restauration, or Calling of the Jews* was published. Finch argued that promises to Israel were for Israel.²⁸ When Finch declared that a Jewish state would someday reign over the whole world, King James I objected and threw Finch into prison. Finch was eventually released when he stipulated loyalty to James.

Even the famed Westminster Assembly included several ministers who held to the future conversion of the Jews.²⁹ Watson names John Dury (1596–1680), Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680), William Gouge (1575–1653), and William Twisse (1578–1646), who drafted the *Shorter Catechism*. Indeed, the *Larger Westminster Catechism* asked, "What do we pray for in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer?" The answer: "We pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in"³⁰

The Dutch Reformed minister William à Brakel (1635–1711) held both that the Jews would be converted and that they would be gathered again to their homeland.³¹ Likewise, the Puritan icon Matthew Henry (1662–1714) argued, that the Jews would indeed be brought "to believe in Christ the true Messiah whom they crucified, and be incorporated into the Christian church." While acknowledging that some believed this had already happened, Henry added, "Others think that it is yet to have its accomplishment toward the end of the world Alas! Who shall live when God doeth this!"³²

Baptists have also held this view. For example, John Gill (1697–1771) commented that Rom. 11:26 was a reference "to the last times, and to a very general conversion of [the people of the Jews] to the Messiah."³³ Charles H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) espoused a political and spiritual renewal of the Jews.³⁴

There is no shortage of more recent figures who have held to Israel's future redemption. Andrew Bonar, Charles Hodge, Michael Horton, John Murray, Kim Riddlebarger have all advocated for this.³⁵ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, James Montgomery

hope of their conversion, but also in the interest of religious toleration, which was gaining momentum in the 1600s. Puritans not only advanced the readmittance of Jews to England, but many also desired their restoration to Zion. See Sokolow, *Zionism*, 53.

²⁷ <https://d6.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/finch-henry-1558-1625>.

²⁸ Finch wrote, "Where Israel, Iudah, Tsion, Jerusalem &c. are named in this argument, the Holy Ghost meaneth not the spiritual Israel, or Church of God collected of the Gentiles, no nor of the Iews and Gentiles both (for each of these haue their promises seuerally and apart) but Israel properly descended out of Iacobs loyns." *The World's Great Restauration. Or The Calling of the Iewes* (London, 1621), 6–7; cited in Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby*, 19.

²⁹ William Watson, "The Westminster Assembly chosen by the British Parliament to restructure the Church of England in 1643 may have been overwhelmingly Calvinist, but it included many premillennial philo-Semites." *Dispensationalism before Darby*, 23.

³⁰ Cited in Murray, *Puritan Hope*, 44.

³¹ *The Christian's Reasonable Service* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1995), 4:510–35.

³² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 365.

³³ John Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (Paris, Ark.: Baptist Standard Bearer, 2006), 8:538–39.

³⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews," from Ezekiel 37:1–10, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* 10:425–436. <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-restoration-and-concession-of-the-jews/#flipbook/>

³⁵ Andrew Bonar, *Redemption Draweth Nigh*; Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1882), 589, 598–99; Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids, Mich.:

Boice, John Macarthur, John Piper, Michael Vlach, John Feinberg, Paul Feinberg, Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock, John Sailhamer, Harold Hoehner, David Doran, Kevin Bauder, Al Mohler, Sinclair Ferguson, and even Doug Wilson have as well.³⁶

Jonathan Edwards, Horatius Bonar, and J. C. Ryle

I now turn to my main focus. I have selected to spend a bit more time with these. They represent three English speaking countries, three different denominations (no Baptists): Jonathan Edwards, Horatius Bonar, and J. C. Ryle. All three are revered dearly by the “Reformed” to one degree or another.³⁷

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) remains North America’s premier theologian. He was an important leader in the first Great Awakening in New England in the 1740s and the author of several theological works of lasting importance. During the heyday of the “Young, Restless, and Reformed,” it was Jonathan Edwards who became the icon and “homeboy” of those types.

Edwards was a postmillennialist who believed that the world would increasingly believe in Christ through the preaching of the gospel, leading to a golden age that fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. Yet he was a careful exegete, who conscientiously tried to interpret Scripture prophecies on their own terms.

In *A History of the Word of Redemption*, Edwards noted that Jer. 50:4 foretold that Christ would destroy Satan’s visible kingdom, including the false religions of “popery,” “Mohammedanism” (Islam), and “Jewish infidelity.”

And then shall all Israel be saved. The Jews in all their dispersions shall cast away their old infidelity, and shall wonderfully have their hearts changed, and abhor themselves for their past unbelief and obstinacy; and shall flow together to the blessed Jesus, penitently, humbly, and joyfully owning him as their glorious king and only savior, and shall with all their hearts as with one heart and voice declare his praises unto other nations. Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews is in the eleventh chapter of Romans.³⁸

Edwards stressed this glorious future:

Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews is in the eleventh chapter of Romans. And there are also many passages of the Old Testament that can’t be interpreted in any other sense, that I can’t now stand to mention. Besides the prophecies of the calling of the Jews, we have a remarkable seal of the fulfillment of this great event in providence by a thing that is a kind of

Zondervan, 2011), 949-50; Murray, *Romans*, 2:96-100; and Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2003), 184-92.

³⁶ John Piper, “All Israel Will Be Saved,” *Desiring God Ministries*, Message by John Piper on Romans 11:22–29, Feb 29, 2004, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/all-israel-will-be-saved>; Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Let’s Study Romans* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2025), 280–85; Douglas Wilson, *Boast Not against the Branches: The Reformed Tradition and the Jews* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2025).

³⁷ In his excellent book, Barry Horner also highlights all three of these men. Though I read it and profited by it years ago, any similarity is unintentional. *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2004).

³⁸ *A History of the Work of Redemption*, WJE 9:469.

continual miracle, viz. the preserving them a distinct nation when in such a dispersed condition for above sixteen hundred years. The world affords nothing else like it—a remarkable hand of providence. When they shall be called, then shall that ancient people that were alone God’s people for so long a time be God’s people again, never to be rejected more, one fold with the Gentiles; and then also shall the remains of the ten tribes wherever they are, and though they have been rejected much longer than the Jews, be brought in with their brethren, the Jews. The prophecies of Hosea especially seem to hold this forth, that in the future glorious times of the church both Judah and Ephraim, or Judah and the ten tribes, shall be brought in together, and shall be united as one people as they formerly were under David and Solomon, as Hosea 1:11, and so in the last chapter of Hosea, and other parts of his prophecy (WJE 9:469-70).

Edwards believed the Biblical promise that the Jews will be converted was proof that Daniel 2, 7, the Book of Revelation, and “the day of the church’s greatest advancement on earth” had not come to pass.³⁹ “And it is also plain in the by the 11th chapter of Romans, that it shall be after the national conversion of the Jews . . . there shall be a general ingathering of the harvest of the whole earth” (WJE 5:337). For Edwards, he insisted that biblical prophecy made clear that the overthrow of the papacy, the conversion of the whole world, including the Jews, would not happen instantly, but gradually (WJE 5:410–11).

Edwards was also something of a Eschatological Zionist. He argued that Scripture foretold that the Jews would return to their own land.

And it is the more evident, that the Jews will return to their own land again, because they never have yet possessed one quarter of that land, which was so often promised them, from the Red Sea to the river Euphrates (Ex. 23:31; Gen. 15:18; Deut. 11:24; Josh. 1:4). Indeed, it was partly fulfilled in Solomon’s time, when he governed all within those bounds for a short time; but so short, that it is not to be thought that this is all the fulfillment of the promise that is to be. And besides, that was not a fulfillment of the promise, because they did not possess it, though they made the nations of it tributary (WJE 5:134).

Edwards even went so far as to draw something of a distinction and set apart Israel as superior in this golden age.

We are not to suppose but that when the nation of the Jews are converted, other Christians will be as much God’s Israel as they, and will have in every respect the same privileges. Neither can we suppose, that their church will have any manner of superiority over other parts of Christ’s church, any otherwise than as that part of the church will be more glorious.” Religion, education, the publication of literature, will excel among the Jews. “Without doubt, they will return to their own land; because when their unbelief ceases, their dispersion, the dreadful and signal punishment of

³⁹ *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer* in WJE 5:336.

their unbelief, will cease too. As they have continued hitherto, with one consent, to dishonor Christ by rejecting the gospel, so shall they meet together to honor him, by openly professing of it with one mouth, and practice it with one heart and one soul, together lamenting their obstinacy, as it is said they shall (Zech. 12:11-12), and together praising God for his grace in enlightening them." After their conversion, ethnic Israel "will ... still be a distinct nation, that they may be a visible monument of God's wonderful grace and power in their calling and conversion (WJE 5:135).

Edwards is careful to stipulate that this does not mean the dividing wall of separation that Christ tore down (Eph. 2) is re-erected. All will look upon each other as brothers.

Horatius Bonar (1808–1889) is another favorite example of mine. Horatius Bonar was a minister in the Free Church of Scotland and was elected that denomination's moderator in 1883. Today he is best remembered for his hymns, such as "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say," and "I Hear the Words of Love." His writings are still loved by many Reformed and republished by Reformation Heritage Books and other houses.

Consider Bonar's approach to hermeneutics: "I advocate literal interpretation. And why? Because Christ himself and his apostles interpreted the Old Testament with a plainness and simplicity that amazes us. Many of their quotations are made according to what some of us might be apt to call ultra-literality."⁴⁰

In another place, Bonar pushed back on any notion that the Church replaces Israel: "It is said, All are one in Christ Jesus, therefore there can be no national distinction of the Jews, no national restoration, no national pre-eminence. Now I confess myself unable to comprehend the ground or force of this reasoning." Bonar protested that he could not understand "how the national distinctness, or even national pre-eminence of the Jews should prevent their being one in Christ Jesus with their Gentile brethren."⁴¹ On the contrary,

We believe in the literal accomplishment of the prophecies regarding the Jews, in which there appear to be many promises of temporal blessings as well as spiritual: but we lay no farther stress upon these than the Word of God lays—we admit spiritual blessings to be the highest and noblest."⁴²

Bonar insisted that though Scripture says all will be one in Christ, that unity will not completely eliminate "national distinctions," but will produce amidst those distinctions "a oneness so spiritual, so divine, so unearthly, as not to be in the very least affected by temporal distinctions of time, or place, or rank."⁴³

Bonar adamantly argued for the future redemption of Israel and the literal fulfillment of other blessings besides. "Those who assert the literal interpretation of the blessings promised to Israel" (including Bonar) do not "exclude the spiritual." On the

⁴⁰ *Prophetical Landmarks: Containing Data for Helping to Determine the Question of Christ's Pre-Millennial Advent* (London: James Nisbet, 1847), 258.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 287.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 288.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 288.

contrary, “They believe that Israel will be converted, and they rejoice in this as the glorious issue towards which the prophets point. But they believe more; they believe not only that they will be converted, but that they will be restored to their own land.”⁴⁴ This in no way diminishes their spiritual blessings. Nor does the enjoyment of Gentiles of Israel’s blessings diminish Israel’s inheritance. Bonar not only argued for the future redemption of ethnic Israel, he contended for what he called “literal blessings” as well. The literal blessings were as important as the divine undoing of a literal curse.⁴⁵

Bonar complained of those in his day that inconsistently applied the word *Israel*. Sometimes they say Israel means literal Israel, sometimes the visible church, or the remnant of Abraham. Which referent such interpreters use for *Israel* is based on no fixed rule.⁴⁶ When the Old Testament promises that Israel will be restored, sometimes they say the prophets are talking about the conversion of the Jews, sometimes they say the prophets mean the New Testament Church, and then sometimes they say the prophets are speaking to the remnant of saved Israelites. To this latter group especially that Bonar protested. “These prophecies speak of the conversion of those called Israel, that is, of the conversion of those who are already converted! They were entitled to the name of Israel because they were believers, or converted men; and yet of these it is foretold that they shall be converted in goodly numbers in the latter days. What a maze!”⁴⁷

Bonar further insisted when the Bible used the phrase “the throne of David,” that throne was never considered to be in heaven or a reign in the hearts of men. The phrase must, Bonar insists, “at least mean *the peculiar sovereignty of Messiah over the literal Israel*.”⁴⁸

J. C. Ryle (1816–1900) was an Oxford-educated bishop in the Church of England and contemporary of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Ryle is known for his evangelical Calvinism. His books are widely recommended by leading Reformed pastors and remain popular, widely published by the likes of the Banner of Truth Trust. He is best known today for his insightful *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* and *Holiness*. One of his works that gets less attention is his 1879 monograph *Coming Events and Present Duties*. This book presents a straightforward defense of premillennialism.⁴⁹ In his opening “Creed” (see appendix), Ryle wrote, “I believe that the Jews shall ultimately be gathered again as a separate nation, restored to their own land, and converted to the faith of Christ, after going through great tribulation.”⁵⁰

Ryle was a strong advocate of the literal interpretation of biblical prophecy. “What I protest against is, the habit of allegorizing plain sayings of the Word of God concerning the future history of the *nation* Israel, and explaining away the fulness of their contents

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 279–80.

⁴⁵ *Prophetical Landmarks*, 315.

⁴⁶ In another place, Bonar complains, “The names Israel, Zion, Jerusalem, etc., are so commonly used among us to denote the Church of Christ, that we seldom think of asking our scriptural authority for this appropriation.” *Prophetical Landmarks*, 307.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁴⁹ Ryle argued that Scripture taught “the second personal advent of our Lord Jesus Christ before the Millennium.” *Coming Events*, 133.

⁵⁰ Ryle, *Coming Events*, x.

in order to accommodate them to the Gentile church."⁵¹ For Ryle, the host of unfilled prophecies (including Jer. 31:10) pointed to the return before the Millennium and "the future literal gathering of the Jewish nation, and their restoration to their own land."⁵²

For Ryle, a key text is Jer. 31:10: "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.'" First, Jeremiah distinguishes Israel from the nations. The prophet foretold a scattering. By the hand of God for their sins, Israel has remained in a state of scattering, Ryle insisted, to the present day, without a king or land.⁵³ The prophet Jeremiah said that the God who scattered Israel would gather them. "That gathering is an event which plainly is yet to come," for it never happened to the ten tribes or even to the remnant that returned from the Babylon captivity.⁵⁴ Jeremiah's prophecy of a restored nation, Ryle added, is echoed by many other prophets, such as Isa 11:11–12; Ezek 37:21; Hos 1:11, 3:4–5, Joel 3:20; Amos 4:14–15, Obad 17; Mic 4:6–7; Zeph 3:14–20; Zech 10:6–10; and Jeremiah 30:3, 11.⁵⁵

J. C. Ryle taught that the plain reading of Scripture demanded a future redemption of ethnic Israel in the conversion of Jews to Christ. He called Paul's words, "All Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26), "one of the great unfulfilled prophecies of Scripture."⁵⁶ Ryle also believed in God's promise to gather Israel as a nation in the Millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Our ultimate authority is not the consensus of church history, but the inspired Word of God. At the same time, we should be very hesitant if we were the only person to teach the Scriptures a certain way (2 Pet 1:20). We have an abundant testimony from millennia of believers when it comes to the hope that God will keep his promises to the Jews. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.

The future redemption of Israel is no novelty. Though I'm certainly not trying to defend the use of the word Reformed, there is no singular historic "Reformed" eschatology. There are many voices, before and after the Reformation, who argued that

⁵¹ Ibid., 126–27. "Reader, accept a friendly exhortation this day. Cleave to the literal sense of Bible words, and beware of departing from it, except in cases of absolute necessity." Ibid., 128.

⁵² Ibid., 133.

⁵³ Ibid., 129–32. It remains a fact that, the modern state of Israel notwithstanding, that Israel remains scattered among the nations.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 133.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 134–37. If God has promised to regather the scattered nation of Israel, then Christians should believe it, no matter how improbable or impossible it may seem to them. Moreover, the "Gentile Churches" have a duty to be concerned for the Jewish people, live holy lives to prevent an offense to the gospel, and "use special efforts in order to promote the conversion of the Jews." Ibid., 141, 145.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 178. Ryle explains, "'All Israel,' ... means the whole people or nation of the Jews. It cannot possibly mean a small elect remnant." Ibid., 179. He added, "I assert that the peculiar position which Israel occupies in the earth is easily explicable in the light of holy Scripture. They are a people reserved and kept separate by God for a grand and special purpose. That purpose is to make them a means of exhibiting to the world in the latter days God's hatred of sin and unbelief, and God's Almighty power and Almighty compassion. They are kept separate that they may finally be saved, converted, and restored to their own land. They are reserved and preserved, in order that God may show in them, as on a platform, to angels and men, how greatly He hates sin, and yet how greatly He can forgive, and how greatly He can convert. Never will that be realized as it will in that day when 'All Israel shall be saved.'" Ibid., 186.

God would redeem Israel. The views that dispensationalists hold regarding the future salvation of Israel and even an Eschatological Zionism are far from new. These ideas existed long before Darby or the Scofield Bible or the Rothschilds' money. These teachings are certainly not heresy, but are, in the best use of the word, "catholic."

In fact, these doctrines are most precious. They ought to move us to evangelize the Jews and pray for their conversion. They ought evoke in us confident thankfulness that "the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable." Indeed, these truths ought to stir us up to worship. Praise is, after all, what these teachings stirred up in Paul, who, after affirming that God would, after the fulness of the Gentiles came in, sovereignly and graciously save the ethnic children of Abraham and Jacob, exclaimed:

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?"

³⁵ "Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?"

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

- Rom. 11:33–36

J. C. Ryle's Prophetical Creed⁵⁷

1. I believe that the world will never be completely converted to Christianity by any existing agency, before the end comes. In spite of all that can be done by ministers, churches, schools, and missions, the wheat and the tares will grow together until the harvest; and when the end comes, it will find the earth in much the same state that it was when the flood came in the days of Noah. (Matt. 13:24–30; 24:37–39)
2. I believe that the wide-spread unbelief, indifference, formalism, and wickedness, which are to be seen throughout Christendom, are only what we are taught to expect in God's Word. Troublous times, departures from the faith, evil men waxing worse and worse, love waxing cold, are things distinctly predicted. So far from making me doubt the truth of Christianity, they help to confirm my faith. Melancholy and sorrowful as the sight is, if I did not see it I should think the Bible was not true. (Matt. 24:12; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1, 4, 13)
3. I believe that the grand purpose of the present dispensation is to gather out of the world an elect people, and not to convert all mankind. It does not surprise me at all to hear that the heathen are not all converted when missionaries preach, and that believers are but a little flock in any congregation in my own land. It is precisely the state of things which I expect to find. The Gospel is to be preached "as a witness," and then shall the end come. This is the dispensation of election, and not of universal conversion. (Acts 15:14; Matt. 24:14)
4. I believe that the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is the great event which will wind up the present dispensation, and for which we ought daily to long and pray. "Thy kingdom come,"—"Come, Lord Jesus"—should be our daily prayer. We look backward, if we have faith, to Christ dying on the cross, and we ought to look forward no less, if we have hope, to Christ coming again. (John 14:3; 2 Tim. 4:8; 2 Pet. 3:12)
5. I believe that the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will be a real, literal, personal, bodily coming; and that as He went away in the clouds of heaven with His body, before the eyes of men, so in like manner He will return. (Acts 1:11)
6. I believe that after our Lord Jesus Christ comes again, the earth shall be renewed, and the curse removed; the devil shall be bound, the godly shall be rewarded, the wicked shall be punished; and that before He comes there shall be neither resurrection, judgment, nor millennium, and that not till after He comes shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. (Acts 3:21; Isa. 25:6–9; 1 Thess. 4:14–18; Rev. 20:1, etc.)
7. I believe that the Jews shall ultimately be gathered again as a separate nation, restored to their own land, and converted to the faith of Christ, after going through great tribulation. (Jer. 30:10, 11; 31:10; Rom. 9:25, 26; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8, 9)

⁵⁷ J. C. Ryle, *Coming Events and Present Duties. Being Miscellaneous Sermons on Prophetical Subjects* (London: William Hunt, 1879), ix–xi.

8. I believe that the literal sense of Old Testament prophecies has been far too much neglected by the Churches, and is far too much neglected at the present day, and that under the mistaken system of spiritualizing and accommodating Bible language, Christians have too often completely missed its meaning. (Luke 24:25, 26)

9. I do not believe that the preterist scheme of interpreting the Apocalypse, which regards the book as almost entirely fulfilled, or the futurist scheme, which regards it as almost entirely unfulfilled, are either of them to be implicitly followed. The truth, I expect, will be found to lie between the two.

10. I believe that the Roman Catholic Church is the great predicted apostacy from the faith, and is Babylon and antichrist, although I think it highly probable that a more complete development of antichrist will yet be exhibited to the world. (2 Thess. 2:3–11; 1 Tim. 4:1–3).

11. Finally, I believe that it is for the safety, happiness, and comfort of all true Christians, to expect as little as possible from Churches or Governments under the present dispensation,—to hold themselves ready for tremendous convulsions and changes of all things established,—and to expect their good things only from Christ's second advent.