

Consider also what would have resulted if national Israel had recognized Jesus Christ as her Messiah. Then, after the tribulation of those days, Christ would have returned, judged the nations, and established his Millennial Kingdom. And because the Body of Christ was not an afterthought, but part of His purpose from "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4, 23), God would still have found a way to establish the Body of Christ. Rather than resulting from Israel's "fall" (Rom. 11:11-12), God would have set up the Body during the time of Israel's blessing and "acceptance" [Rom. 11:15]. Thus, probably, sometime during Christ's 1,000-year reign, God would have announced the formation of a new fellowship of believers, called the Body of Christ.

Tragically, however, Israel did not accept their Messiah, but they rejected Him, as predicted in Christ's fig tree parable (Luke 13:6-10). In three years of Christ's earthly ministry, Jesus sought fruit (faith) within Israel but effectively found "none." Still, He decided to offer Israel the Kingdom throughout the next year, postponing their corporate judgment, that of Israel being "cut down." But one year after Israel "cut off" their Messiah, He "cut off" them. Beginning with the following year, the fifth year, He turned to the Gentiles. God foreshadowed the likelihood of this timetable with the following command:

"When you come into the land, and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as uncircumcised. Three years it shall be as uncircumcised to you. It shall not be eaten. But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the LORD. And in the fifth year you may eat its fruit, that it may yield to you its increase..." Lev. 19:23-25

This levitical passage demonstrates God's insight. The first three years of a tree in Israel were to yield no fruit; this timeframe prefigured the lack of fruit witnessed by Christ (Luke 13:7), who is the true vine (John 15:1). In the fourth year, all the fruit of the tree shall be set aside for the priests of the Lord (offerings "to the Lord" often went to the priest [Lev. 19:21-22; 23:20; 27:9, 21; Ezek. 45:1-4]). For, in the fourth year after Christ's ministry began, God especially sought fruit from the leaders of the people (Acts 4:8, 10, 12; Acts 5:17-18, 21, 24, 31; etc.). For if the leaders put their faith in Christ, then the people might also [Isa. 9:16; Mat. 15:14]. If this occurred, then the fruit would flow throughout all the land of Israel, in the fifth year and beyond. Everyone would enjoy their fruit as a gift from God. For three years, Christ sought fruit in Israel but none was available. For the fourth year, God offered the fruit of salvation to the leaders of Israel. Beginning with the fifth year, God desired an outpouring of salvation throughout all the land.

The Law of Unexpected Consequences

Cain murdered his brother. Righteous men since then have braced themselves against the hateful effects of sin. The wisest men have worked to offset those effects, both within and without the Body of Christ. If sin can produce hatred of one's own brother, then naturally it can even more readily produce hatred of far more distant relatives.

Now extrapolate from this simple observation. Instead of individuals within families, consider tribes, nations, and racial distinctions within the human race. The effects of sin, like water and electricity, follow the path of least resistance. As men could have easily anticipated, racism grossly marred the history of the world. But early Christians might never have suspected the extent to which their successors would yield to racism, hating their human brothers, the Jews. Through many centuries of Christianity, leaders and followers alike have often shared a passionate dislike of the Jews.

God despises this animosity toward His chosen (though temporarily set aside) people (Rom. 11:18-22). Has this anti-Semitism existed within the confines of the true church? If so, how did it get there? And what can best fend it off in the future?

Racism Within the Body

The degree and prevalence of hatred toward Jews by Christians will shock many readers. Of true Christians, Martin Luther ranks among the most vicious against the Israelites. Many years after breaking

away from the Roman Catholic Church, reformation founder Luther wrote a lengthy treatise he titled *On the Jews and Their Lies*. He begins thus:

I had made up my mind to write no more either about the Jews or against them... these miserable and accursed people... Much less do I propose to convert the Jews, for that is impossible.⁵

"Listen, Jew," Luther mocks them, "[your] Jerusalem... temple and priesthood have been destroyed for over 1,460 years," and adding, "Let the Jews bite on this nut..."⁶

So we are even at fault in not avenging all this innocent blood of our Lord and of the Christians which they shed for three hundred years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the blood of the children they have shed since then (which still shines forth from their eyes and their skin). We are at fault in not slaying them.⁷

Adolf Hitler echoed Luther's sentiment:

Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.⁸

In his diatribe, Martin Luther stated that the Jews have a plan of:

...finally overcoming us, killing us all... and robbing us of all our property (as they daily pray and hope).⁹

Luther heard lies about the Jews which he chose to believe, and he spread those lies further, including that they were killing Christian children and poisoning Gentile drinking wells. In 1994, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America repudiated Martin Luther's anti-Jewish statements. Some, however, seek to dilute Luther's guilt by quoting friendly statements from his 1523 work, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*. However, in the 1520s, the reformer had high hopes of converting great numbers of Jews. When such results did not materialize, he eagerly disseminated the misinformation and hatred that his generation had inherited from earlier centuries. Others defend Luther arguing that these sentiments flowed from the pen of an older, frustrated man of declining health. Humanly speaking, such circumstances do not in the least absolve Luther of racism.

Many other Christian leaders despised the Jews. Ignatius, bishop of Syrian Antioch, martyred about 110 AD in Rome, wrote, "If any one celebrates the Passover along with the Jews, or receives the emblems of their feast, he is a partaker with those that killed the Lord and His apostles."¹⁰

"Have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd," proscribed Eusebius (263-339 AD), the famous and well-received church historian when he warned men against the Jews who "are swayed by every impulse of the mad spirit that is in them" and are "deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul."¹¹ His hair-triggered passion arose over the minor matter of rejecting the date on which the Jews celebrated the Passover in favor of an alternative date selected for remembrance of the crucifixion by the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. Eusebius then urged Christians to "have nothing in common with that nation of parricides who slew their Lord"¹² blaming the sons for the sins of the father against strong biblical mandate

5 Martin Luther, 1543, translated by Martin H. Bertram in *Luther's Works*, Volume 47, Fortress Press, 1971, p. 137, Philadelphia

6 Ibid. p. 138

7 Ibid. p. 267

8 *Mein Kampf*, translated by Ralph Manheim, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971, p. 65.

9 Luther, *ibid.* p. 267

10 Ignatius Theophoros *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philippians* Chapter XIV, Farewells And Cautions.

11 Eusebius Pamphilus, *The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine* Book 3, Chapter XVIII

12 Ibid. Chapter XIX

(Deut. 24:16; 2 Ki. 14:6; 2 Chr. 25:4; Ezek. 18:2-3, 20). Christians who tragically blame the Jews for Germany's crimes echo Chapter XVII of *The Oration—In Praise Of The Emperor Constantine* on the 30th anniversary of his reign, where Eusebius blames the Jews for the crimes against them of the Roman Empire. He usurps scriptural blessings for the Church but leaves the curses for the Jews.

John Chrysostom (347-Sept. 14, 407 AD), early Church Father and archbishop of Constantinople, said outright, "I hate the Jews."¹³ Earlier, in the first of eight sermons against the Jews in 387 AD, Chrysostom had said "the synagogue is a dwelling of demons" and asked, "when God forsakes a people, what hope of salvation is left?"¹⁴ Chrysostom adds that in the synagogue, "the slayers of Christ gather together... Does not greater harm come from this place since the Jews themselves are demons?"¹⁵ In his sixth sermon, Chrysostom too blamed the Jews generally for the crimes committed against them and asked, "Is it not obvious that he [God] hated you and turned his back on you once and for all?... Is it not because God has abandoned you?"¹⁶ For many centuries, such Bible teaching has ignored God's clear promises to one day return to the nation of Israel. Chrysostom stated of the "temple" that "you give it a name more worthy than it deserves if you call it a brothel, a stronghold of sin, a lodging-place for demons, a fortress of the devil..."¹⁷

Enabling such racism, replacement theology taught that the Jews had become superfluous to God's plans. Justin Martyr (100-165 AD) spread replacement theology, teaching that Gentiles had completely replaced Jews in God's design. As he wrote to the Roman Senate, "Gentiles... are the true Israelitic race."¹⁸ Justin Martyr made the indefensible statement that "the Christians from among the Gentiles are... more true than those from among the Jews"¹⁹ and that, as did the Romans, the Jews also "kill and punish us [Christians] whenever they have the power."²⁰

An unknown author penned the anti-Jewish *Letter of Barnabas* early in the 2nd-century to teach Christians how to interpret the Old Testament. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215 AD) quoted from *Barnabas* and the 4th-century *Codex Sinaiticus* included the apocryphal book in its New Testament. The text promotes replacement theology teaching that Christians and specifically not Jews, are heirs of Abraham's covenant stating "let us see if this people is the heir, or... if the covenant belongs to us or to them."²¹ (Clement, by the way, unwittingly helped to set Christians on a collision path with Jews by systematically merging Greek philosophy into Christianity, as did many after him including Origen and Augustine. Hellenistic and Jewish thought do not readily mix, so this forced scholastic integration made the Church even more hostile to Jews than it otherwise may have been.)

Tertullian (c. 160-220 AD), Christian theologian of controversial yet widespread influence, said that "all the synagogue of Israel did slay Him"²² blaming the entire Jewish race for the crucifixion. "Albeit Israel wash daily all his limbs over, yet is he never clean," Tertullian wrote, "His hands, at all events, are ever unclean, eternally dyed with the blood of the prophets, and of the Lord Himself; on that account, as being hereditary culprits from their privity to their fathers' crimes..."²³

13 John Chrysostom, Homily VI, Section VI, 387 AD

14 Ibid. Homily I, Section III

15 Ibid. Section VI

16 Ibid. Homily VI, Section IV

17 Ibid. Section VII

18 *The Second Apology of Justin for the Christians Addressed to the Roman Senate*, Chapter CXXXV

19 Ibid., Chapter LIII (see also Chapter CXXXI)

20 Ibid., Chapter XXXI

21 *The Epistle of Barnabas* Chapter XIII

22 Tertullian, *An Answer To The Jews* translated by Rev. S. Thelwall Chapter VIII in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, A. Roberts and J. Donaldson editors, Ante-Nicene Christian Library, Volume 18, p. 225.

23 Ibid. *On Prayer*, Chapter XIV, Volume 11, p. 189

Origen (185-253 AD), established allegory as a primary interpretation method enabling the defense of virtually any false teaching, including replacement theology. In his commentary on Song of Solomon (considered a masterpiece by Jerome), Origen made the Body of Christ into the Bride of Christ, supplanting Israel.

Constantine (c. 287-337 AD), Christian leader and the first Christian Roman emperor, fostered anti-Semitic policies and helped outlaw conversion to Judaism.²⁴ "You should consider not only that the number of churches in these provinces make a majority, but also that it is right to demand what our reason approves," said Constantine, "and that we should have nothing in common with the Jews."²⁵

Jerome (c. 347-420 AD) translated the Latin Vulgate, the official church Bible, and taught that the Jews were incapable of understanding Scripture. He wrote, "If it is expedient to hate any men and to loathe any race I have a strange dislike for those of the circumcision."²⁶

Augustine (354-430 AD) believed that the Jews were destined to wander the earth as a sign of the Christian victory over national Israel. He wrote, "The true image of the Hebrew is Judas Iscariot, who sells the Lord for silver. The Jew can never understand the Scriptures and," Augustine repeats a familiar theme, "forever will bear the guilt for the death of Jesus."²⁷ Augustine had lived and taught in Rome, and then Milan, for more than a decade; yet must have forgotten that, while at the behest of the Jewish high priest, the Romans themselves sentenced and executed Christ, making all the world, both Jew and Gentile, responsible for the act, as they had already been, for the need. Further:

St. Augustine, for example, could already cite a pagan, the Roman philosopher Seneca (d. 65), as his authority for the fact that the Jews were "an arch-criminal race" (*sceleratissima gens*).²⁸

The crusades of the church also persecuted Jews. While designed to free Palestine from the rule of Muslims, the first crusade also targeted European Jews.²⁹ Crusaders for the next few hundred years killed many thousands of Jews. From then till the twentieth century, Christians regularly persecuted Jews, individually and officially. The church helped the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290 and France in 1394.³⁰ Then, while the voyage of Columbus commenced, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled Jews from Spain.³¹

John Calvin wrote in his commentary on the minor prophets, Part VII:

But **as the Jews have fallen from their place, the gentiles have succeeded and occupied their position**; according to what Christ threatened to men of his age, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43).

Returning to Luther, the most influential leader within Protestantism recommended:

First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them... Moses... would be the first to set fire to the synagogues and houses of the Jews.

²⁴ *Constantine I* entry at Wikipedia.org.

²⁵ Dixon, M., *The Rebirth and Restoration of Israel*, Chichester, Sovereign World, 1988, p. 80

²⁶ Saint Jerome, *Epistle LXXXIV*, 3; *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL), 55, p. 123, as cited in J. E. Seaver, *The Persecution of Jews in the Roman Empire*, p. 51, (Lawrence, Kansas, University of Kansas Publications, 2000).

²⁷ Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, *Tractatus Adversus Iudaeos*, 415 AD, as widely quoted including online by the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education.

²⁸ Heiko A. Oberman, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1984), p. xi, translated by James I. Porter from the German *Wurzeln Antisemitismus* (Berlin, Germany: Severin und Siedler, 1981).

²⁹ *First Crusade* entry at Wikipedia.org.

³⁰ *Jewish Refugees* entry at Wikipedia.org.

³¹ "Judaism" Encyclopædia Britannica.com; "Jews" Encarta.com

Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed... Instead, they might be lodged under a roof or in a barn...

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings... be taken from them.

Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life...³²

A German-speaking friend accompanied me to the library to satisfy my need to confirm the accuracy of this English rendition. Could Luther actually have been so repugnant? Standing among the stacks at the University of Colorado in Boulder, my translator opened Volume 53 of *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. My friend soon began to sweat. Translating under his breath, I heard a few of the above sentences, and then he began reading in German. We both noticed his hands shaking. While we had heard accusations of Luther's anti-Semitism, the extent of the actual hatred horrified us both. Meanwhile, Luther's suggestions continued:

Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. For they have no business in the country-side... Let them stay at home.

Sixth, I advise... that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them...³³

Luther adds, "let us emulate the common sense of other nations such as France, Spain, Bohemia, etc., compute with them how much their usury has extorted from us, divide this amicably, but then eject them forever from the country."³⁴

Why the Hatred?

Sin bears fruit of misdirected hatred. Also, false teaching may incline toward racism individuals who otherwise would never fall into that particular wickedness. No wonder that teachers "receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1). Consider the countless believers who, remiss in their own study of the Word, learned about the Jews from Martin Luther. The reformer alleged that Israel was no longer, and could never again be, God's "own people" since the Lord would never handle His "own people" as cruelly as He has treated the Jews:

For one dare not regard God as so cruel that he would punish his own people so long, so terribly, so unmercifully, and in addition keep silent, comforting them neither with words nor with deeds, and **fixing no time limit and no end to it**.³⁵

Luther embraced and promoted replacement theology, that God is utterly finished with national Israel, that He has utterly rejected Her, that He will never return to her. Replacement theologians teach that God grafted in the Body of Christ eternally replacing Israel. This troublesome teaching misses the overview of the Bible and ignores specific important passages concerning Israel. As a result, Bible difficulty blends into frustration, and for some into anger, and for some of them, into hatred. If only such men would learn that God still loves the Jews; that still "they are beloved for the sake of the fathers" (Rom. 11:28); that "God is able to graft them in again" (Rom. 11:23); and that He plans to refine them in the fire of the Great Tribulation (Jer. 30:7; Joel 2:27-32; Rev. 7:4-8).

Seven chapters of the Bible most explain its plot: Jeremiah 18; Luke 13; Acts 15; Romans 11; Galatians 2; Ephesians 3; and First Timothy 1. Of these, the first and last three focus their attention on the central chapter, which most clearly explains the plot. Contrast replacement theology with the view of Israel in Romans 11:

32 Martin Luther, *ibid.* p. 268-269

33 *Ibid.* p. 270

34 *Ibid.* p. 272

35 *Ibid.* p. 138

Replacement Theology	Romans 11
God cut off the Jews "fixing no time limit and no end to it." -Luther	For I do not desire... that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that <i>blindness in part has happened to Israel until</i> the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. v. 25
Once cast away, God will never accept Israel back.	For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, <i>what will their acceptance be</i> but life from the dead? v. 15
Prophecy never suggests that God might graft Israel back in again.	And <i>they also</i> , if they do not continue in unbelief, <i>will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.</i> v. 23
Once God unified Gentiles spiritually through the Body of Christ, He was finished with natural Israel.	For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, <i>how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?</i> v. 24
Prophecies <i>yet future</i> concerning Israel refer to the Body of Christ, not Jacob's descendants. They refer to "us," not "them."	And so all <i>Israel</i> will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from <i>Jacob</i> ; For this is My covenant with <i>them</i> , When I take away <i>their</i> sins." vv. 26-27
Paul's <i>present tense</i> , positive remarks about Israel no longer refer to the Jews but now to the Body of Christ.	Concerning the gospel <i>they</i> are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election <i>they</i> are beloved for the sake of the fathers. v. 28
God has forever revoked his covenant with the Jews of Israel.	For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. v. 29

Replacement theology strikes at the heart of the Bible and takes a swipe at the heart of God, who has there provided a hiding place for future Israel. Men should expose this evil without, however, committing its antithesis. In showing kindness toward the Jews, do not love them to death, guiding them straight toward hell. Christians should work to persuade all Jewish people, as well as all Kenyans and Malaysians for that matter, of the truth of Jesus Christ, for God will not save any man who rejects His Son. The following Scriptures related to God's requirement for Jews to put their faith in Christ come from the *Jewish New Testament* and the Hebrew *Tanakh*:

"...Do you know who will accuse you? Moshe [Moses], the very one you have counted on! For **if you really believed Moshe, you would believe Me**; because it was about Me that he wrote. But if you don't believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" *JNT* Yochanan (John) 5:45-46

"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Beit-Tzaidah [Bethsaida]... And you, K'far-Nachum [Capernium]... you will be brought down to Sh'ol [hell]... **whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.**" *JNT* Luke 10:13-16

...to this day the same veil remains over them [Israel] when they read the Old Covenant; it has not been unveiled, because **only by the Messiah is the veil taken away**. Yes, till today, whenever Moshe is read, a veil lies over their heart. "But," says the *Torah*, "whenever someone turns to *Adonai*, the veil is taken away." *JNT* 2 Cor. 3:14-16

Brothers, my heart's deepest desire and my prayer to God for Israel is for their salvation; for I can testify to their zeal for God. But it is not based on correct understanding; for, since **they are unaware of God's way of making people righteous and instead seek to set up their own**, they have not submitted themselves to God's way of making people righteous. For **the goal at which the *Torah* aims is the Messiah**, who offers righteousness to everyone

who trusts... there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—*Adonai* is the same for everyone... So trust comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through a word proclaimed about the Messiah. *JNT* Rom. 10:1-4, 12, 17

For God so loved the world that he gave his only and unique Son, so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life, instead of being utterly destroyed... Those who trust in him are not judged; those who do not trust have been judged already, in that **they have not trusted in the one who is God's only and unique Son.** *JNT* Yochanan (John) 3:16, 18

The next *Shabbat*, nearly the whole city gathered together to hear the message about the Lord; but when the Jews who had not believed saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and spoke up against what Sha'ul was saying and insulted him. However, Sha'ul and Bar-Nabba answered boldly: "It was necessary that God's word be spoken first to you. But **since you are rejecting it and are judging yourselves unworthy of eternal life—why, we're turning to the Goyim! For that is what Adonai has ordered us to do...**" *JNT* Acts 13:44-47

We are Jews by birth, not so-called '*Goyishe* sinners'; even so, we have come to realize that **a person is not declared righteous by God on the ground of his legalistic observance of Torah commands, but through the Messiah Yeshua's trusting faithfulness.** Therefore, we too have put our trust in Messiah Yeshua and become faithful to him, in order that we might be declared righteous on the ground of the Messiah's trusting faithfulness and not on the ground of our legalistic observance of *Torah* commands. For **on the ground of legalistic observance of Torah commands, no one will be declared righteous.**" *JNT* Gal. 3:15-16

They answered him, "Our father is Avraham..." **Yeshua replied to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me...** Why don't you understand what I'm saying? Because you can't bear to listen to my message... Whoever belongs to God listens to what God says; the reason you don't listen is that you don't belong to God." *JNT* Yochanan (John) 8:39, 42-43, 46

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet from among your own people, like myself; **him you shall heed....** *Tanakh* TORAH Deut. 18:15

Peter quoted the Torah saying to the "Men of Israel:"

"For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that **every soul who will not hear that Prophet [Jesus] shall be utterly destroyed** from among the people.'" Acts 3:22-23 New King James

Paul "vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 18:28 NKJV). And God himself stated:

"I will raise up a prophet for them from among their own people, like yourself: I will put My words in his mouth and he will speak to them all that I command him; and **if anybody fails to heed the words he speaks in My name, I myself will call him to account.**" *Tanakh* TORAH Deut. 18:18-19

Christians must love men enough to warn them of judgment apart from Christ. And believers should not keep score of misdeeds done by race, judging the whole by the wickedness of some. Otherwise, think of the crimes for which men should discriminate against Americans, Italians, Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Japanese, Chinese, Egyptians, Iranians, Rwandans, etc. However, each man stands on his own merits [Gen. 18:32; Num. 16:22].

Fending Off Future Hatred

Some adherents to replacement theology soften their position by quoting the above Romans 11 passages and agreeing that countless Jews will turn to their Messiah sometime in the future. However, they see these as individual conversions, similar to when Canadians, for example, trust Christ, rather than recognizing that God will return to Israel as a nation and to His program for the Kingdom in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Does God welcome this moderation of the earlier acrimonious view? Doubtlessly. Assuredly, though, He would prefer these believers to more fully understand and proclaim His program for someday returning in earnest to Israel. Wise men prefer the whole truth to well-meaning half-truths.

All along, however, the side effects of dispensational theology have included respect for Jews and all "races" of men. Some other believers love the Jews and recognize the danger of replacement theology but do not understand the plot of the Bible. So, in an effort to oppose replacement, they maintain that God never cut off Israel. In so doing, they unwittingly prop up replacement theology. Weak opposition often backfires. Biblically weak resistance to false teaching might reinforce that teaching, as other anti-replacement theologies have done. Too much remains at stake to tolerate sloppy Bible study.

Jew and Gentile equally disobeyed and equally abetted the death of Christ. The Jewish chief priests and the chief Gentile authorities conspired to kill him (Mat. 20:18-19; Acts 4:27), when the Jews demanded (Luke 23:23) and the Gentiles carried out (Mat. 27:27-35; Mark 15:15) His crucifixion. Thus "God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all" (Rom. 11:32)

If Bible teachers would have kept the Bible's overview before the eyes of Christians throughout the centuries, a great barrier would have been erected against anti-Semitism:

For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. Rom. 11:30-31

Understanding the Word and knowing God well best protects believers from the world and from themselves.

Canonical Order

Even the order of books in the New Testament support the plot of the Bible:

New Testament Plot	Order of the Canon
Christ went to Israel.	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
God cut off Israel when He grafted in the Gentiles.	Acts of the Apostles
God ministers to the Gentiles (and Jews) of the Body of Christ.	Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
God returns to Israel.	Hebrews
God ministers to Israel (including proselytes).	James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude
God consummates His plan for Israel (and all else).	Revelation

The arrangement of these books, in an order that coincides with the plot of the Bible and of the New Testament, suggests God's hand subtly at work. The canon of the New Testament gradually became self-evident through widespread acceptance. In the fourth century, Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria

authoritatively delimited the canon, likely unaware of the significance of the order of the New Testament books.

As an aside, consider the sequence of the Circumcision Epistles. Just as Acts marks the transition from Israel to the Body of Christ, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* comes as a bookmark, to indicate an abrupt change back to the Circumcision message for the Hebrews. Now notice the order of the next books, James, Peter, and John. Christ formed His inner circle of Peter first, then the brothers James and John (Mat. 17:1; Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33; Luke 8:51; 9:28). Peter leads off each list that enumerates the Twelve (Mat. 10:2; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). Herod killed John's brother and coincidentally, another James rose up to not only take his place, but to unseat Peter as the leader of the Circumcision in Jerusalem. Consequently, Peter did not persuade the men from James to behave properly, but they influenced him negatively in Galatians Two. And James presided over the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 and suggested Paul's Jerusalem strategy in Acts 21. Thus the Canon gives James precedence over Peter and John, as does Paul (Gal. 2:9; 1 Cor. 15:7). (However, Peter gets two books and more space to signify his eternal headship among the Twelve, and John, while coming last of these three, gets three books as the one Jesus especially loved. Finally little known Jude completes the section. According to Eusebius, in his 4th-century *Ecclesiastical History*, Roman emperor Domitian (81-96 AD) summoned Jude's grandchildren from Galilee to probe for a possible political threat, since they were believed to be "descendants of David." Since Christ Himself descended from David and lived in Galilee, this information adds to the evidence that Jude, and James too, (Jude 1, Gal. 1:19; Mat. 13:55; Mark 6:3), were half brothers of Christ.

Prior to the acceptance of the final twenty-seven books for inclusion in the New Testament, various lists had limited influence. From the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, consider Marcion's list as one historical example of the dangers of a false canon:

Marcion (flourished c. 140), who had Gnostic tendencies... set up a "canon" that totally repudiated the Old Testament and anything Jewish. He viewed the Creator God of the Old Testament as a cruel God of retribution and the Jewish Law. His canon consisted of *The Gospel*, a "cleaned up" Luke (the least Jewish), and the *Apostolikon* (ten Pauline letters with Old Testament references and analogies edited out, without Hebrews, I and II Timothy, and Titus).³⁶

Marcion's error moved the Body of Christ toward efforts to validate certain writings as authoritative and to eventually coalesce them into the canon. Still, how common today, approaching two millennia later, for Christians to echo Marcion's accusations against the "God of the Old Testament as a cruel God of retribution" and the Christian God as one of love. Popular cliché might lead one to believe that God improved between testaments, after counseling perhaps. Lacking an overview leaves Christians at risk. Fringe ideas blur into mainstream confusion. Then, without a critical mass of Bible understanding, the Body of Christ succumbs to all sorts of error.

Against such confusion, the canon's final arrangement, in conformity with the outline of the New Testament, encourages the student to carefully attend to the plot of the Bible.

Two General Criticisms

For over a century a body of literature has grown which opposes the systematic type of theology as found in *The Plot*. Aside from disputing various details, such critics make two broad arguments. First, they criticize general dispensational ideas for being a late development in the history of Christianity. Critics trace specific doctrinal developments including *Israel as distinct from the Body* and the *pre-tribulation Rapture* to the first Plymouth Brethren in the 1830s and to some of their contemporaries. Second, while admitting to some outstanding Christian practices among these early dispensationalists, they rightly expose some bizarre behavior as well.

³⁶ "Biblical Literature" *Britannica CD*. Version 97. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1997.

Is Dispensationalism a Late Development?

The term *dispensationalism* describes the theology presented in *The Plot*. The word dispensation, meaning "house rules," comes from the Greek *oikonomia* which appears in key passages such as:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of **the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you** Eph. 3:1-2

To me... this **grace was given, that I should preach** among the Gentiles... to make all people see what is **the oikonomia [dispensation] of the mystery** Eph. 3:8-9

...for the sake of His Body, which is the church, of which **I became a minister according to the oikonomia [dispensation] from God which was given to me for you**, to fulfill the word of God, **the mystery**... Col. 1:24-26

...for His body's sake, which is the church: whereof **I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you**, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery... Col. 1:25 KJV

[W]oe is unto me, if I preach not *the gospel*! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, **a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me**. 1 Cor. 9:16-17 KJV

If *The Plot* correctly presents the Bible's overview, then Paul himself presented and defended dispensationalism. Dispensations predate Paul, however, with milestones occurring back through David, Moses, and Abraham, right back to Adam's day when God first changed the rules. Thus while this system of theology enjoyed a renaissance in the early 1800s, its foundation lies squarely on the Bible of old. Christians lost sight even of the foundational doctrine of justification by grace which the public did not recover until 1517 when Luther was said to have fastened his ninety-five theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

Almost every Christian accepts dispensationalism to some extent. For example, most all believers recognize that God changed the rules in Eden, and again when He added circumcision, then again with the Mosaic law. Even those who vigorously oppose dispensationalism admit that God no longer demands animal sacrifice. The very beliefs of anti-dispensationalists reveal that they, in large part, accept that which they purportedly reject: that God changed many of the rules.

To what extent, then, do most Christians recognize dispensationalism. Most believe in some transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, or from the Old Testament to the New, or from law to grace, or from the prophecy to the fulfillment, or from Israel to the Body of Christ. However, most Christians fail to see this matter as an overriding hermeneutic framework. So they put very little effort into understanding God's transitions. Some take a stab at the last transition putting it at the beginning of the New Testament, at Matthew 1:1. Others put it at the cross, others at the resurrection and still others at Pentecost. But as Part I carefully shows, the transition point when God cut off Israel and grafted in the Gentiles (Rom. 11:15) occurred in Acts Nine.

A reasonable label for the form of dispensationalism presented herein is *Twelve Out*, meaning that the Twelve Apostles never entered into the Body but would always remain a part of Israel as Christ had promised them (Mat. 19:28; Luke 22:29-30) and as He later reaffirmed (Rev. 21:12-14; Rom. 11:29; Gal. 2:7). Most dispensationalists suppose the Body began in Acts Two. However in Acts Two through Acts Eight, God encourages Israel to receive their Messiah so as to usher in their Kingdom (Acts 3:19-21); and also at that time the Twelve still operated as the primary actors. Properly marking the point of Paul's conversion and commission to the Gentiles, another term for the dispensational position herein is *Acts Nine*, as in, "Was dispensationalist C. I. Scofield an *Acts Nine* dispensationalist?" Answer: "Not until his death."

Most Christians are flatly unaware of this powerful scheme of Bible interpretation. However, not long ago many believed the earth was flat, and men may call the identification of gravity a *late development*. But to what end? Some ask why so few today understand *Acts Nine* dispensationalism. Of the relatively few who have even heard of Paul's distinction, most have not seen a clear, thoroughgoing presentation of his

teaching. By January 1, 2000, nationwide more than 2,500 copies of the manuscript were sold (most at its initial price of \$49.95) to a widely varied Christian audience. (Feedback suggests that on average, two people read each sold copy of *The Plot*.) The results have been overwhelming. *Based on the response received*, over ninety-five percent of those who read the manuscript express excitement and joy at their newfound knowledge. Some share extreme frustration, including Mary Ann Krupa from Pittsburgh and Francis Stephenson from Santa Barbara, who complained of studying the Bible for ten and fifty years respectively, before learning how to understand the Word and how to resolve hundreds of apparent contradictions. Brand new believers (some who began reading prior to conversion), much to the author's surprise, consumed these pages with enthusiasm. Being safeguarded from so many clichés and misinterpretations, they have often presented a powerful *and effective* witness to their family, friends and even to long-time Christians. Indeed, Christian leaders too love *The Plot*, from an elder in an Evangelical Free Church, to an elder and a pastor in Charismatic fellowships, to a pastor in a Baptist church, to the entire elder board of a dispensational church, to the Dean of Derby School of Theology in Denver. Those leaders who have read through *The Plot*, without exception as of the date of this writing, have gone on to teach and preach the Bible based on its overview, and to recommend *The Plot* to their churches.

But again, some may pursue the line of questioning, "Why don't more believers understand *Acts Nine* dispensationalism?" They will! But given biblical history, as a rule one would expect Christians generally to have a poor understanding of Scripture. Throughout the Old Testament and at the time of Christ, the people, and even the more religious members of society had severe misunderstandings and misinterpretations of God and His Word. Some early church practices expressed bizarre theological concepts, for example, that a man could only repent of serious sins at his baptism, and if he later committed, say, fornication, he could not effectively repent nor take communion until upon his death bed while receiving holy unction.³⁷ Baptismal regeneration also took a foothold.³⁸ This occurred because of the early departure from the mystery that Christ revealed to Paul and the resultant mixing of the covenants of law and grace. And early church fathers began teaching infant baptism.³⁹ (This error, a symptom of replacement theology, replaces circumcision with baptism, while actually, God prescribed both symbolic rituals for Israel, one for male infants, the other for all the penitent.) By the time of the reformation, church leaders executed many of those who only baptized converts and abandoned infant baptism.⁴⁰ One might think that the well-preserved writings of the early church fathers would be among the most familiar of Christian writings. However, Christians largely ignore *The Didache*, Tertullian, and Origen for example, because of their strange doctrines. Rather than surprise, one *expects* that the Church would have only a murky understanding of the Word.

Augustine has perhaps more influence than any other theologian, even after sixteen centuries. He initially saw that Paul's gospel of grace stood in contrast to Israel's covenant of law. However, he cherished his education in pagan Greek philosophy. Tragically, he reinterpreted the Bible, and specifically Paul's writings, through the murky lens of platonic thought. As he confessed:

"So now **I seized greedily upon the adorable writing of Your Spirit, and especially upon the apostle Paul.** And I found that those difficulties, in which **it had once seemed to me that he contradicted himself** and that the text of his discourse did not agree with the testimonies of **the law and the prophets**, vanished away. In that pure eloquence I saw One Face, and I learned to rejoice with trembling. **I found that whatever truth I had read in the Platonists was said here** with praise of Your grace: that he who sees should not so glory as if he had not received—and received, indeed, not only what he sees but even the power to see,

37 Henry C. Lea, *Studies in Church History: The rise of the temporal power* (London, UK: Sampson Low, Son & Martson, 1869), p. 244, 249

38 Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, ch. LXI, c. 150 AD; Tertullian, *On Baptism*, ch. I, c. 210 AD; etc.

39 Irenaeus c. 130-201 AD; Tertullian c. 155-230 AD; Origen c. 185-254 AD; etc.

40 Thieleman van Bragt, *Martyrs Mirror* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press, 1938, originally 1660), re: Anabaptists

for what has he that he has not received? And further, that he who sees is not only taught to see You who are always the same but is also strengthened...⁴¹

Paul's message of grace as distinct from the law had clearly presented itself to Augustine. He interpreted away what he originally found in Paul's writing, by his own admission, not on scriptural grounds. Imitating Aristotle, Augustine reworked the ideas of his teacher. He reveled in the insights platonic thought gave him to resolve the apparent conflict between Paul and Moses. Augustine preferred Plato's methodology over Paul's mystery. He sacrificed the uniqueness of the dispensation of grace. He subordinated the Bible to Greek philosophy.

Following Augustine, John Calvin's movement seized also upon the Greeks, as had the Roman Catholic church of the Renaissance. The *immutable* god of the pagan Greeks who is "always the same" could not possibly retract one failed offer to tender another. The living God of the Bible of course has the power to so act, but not an unchanging God, it has long been argued. The author's materials on predestination and free will, referred to below, further expose the harm done to theology by Greek philosophy.

But what of the modern dispensational doctrines of the Rapture and the dramatic separation of law and grace? The community of Bedford, England selected John Bunyan as their pastor in 1672 upon his release from a 12-year prison term in their county jail. The religious persecutors of Charles II imprisoned Bunyan for preaching the Gospel outside of the structure of the government church. Bunyan returned to jail for six months when persecution renewed in 1677. In 1678 he published the first half of the book that would remain second in sales only to the Holy Bible for centuries. *Pilgrim's Progress* brilliantly chronicles the journey of two men from their hometown to the Celestial City as an allegory of the Christian life. Within site of the gate of the city there remained one last obstacle, the crossing of a raging river. Fearing the river:

The pilgrims then began to inquire if there was no other way to the gate; to which they [were] answered, "Yes, but there hath not any, save two, to wit, Enoch and Elijah, been permitted to tread that path, since the foundation of the world, nor shall, until the last trumpet shall sound."⁴²

Throughout *Pilgrim's Progress*, in various editions, hundreds of Bible verse references helping the reader see the scriptures that Bunyan weaves through his story. After the phrase "until the last trumpet shall sound" the footnote references First Corinthians 15:51, 52. That text along with the next verse, reads:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1 Cor. 15:51-53

Bunyan realized that this world had two exits to heaven. The main road crosses the Jordan River after passing through the length of the valley of the shadow of death. But there exists another less traveled route so far only traversed by the two men who never died, whom God translated and brought bodily into heaven, Enoch and Elijah (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5; 2 Ki. 2:11). Bunyan does not place this Rapture exit prior to the Tribulation. However, believers should realize that long before the Plymouth Brethren movement, careful Bible students believed that, in the Last Days, believers would leave this planet and enter heaven bypassing physical death, as did "Enoch and Elijah." So as "Elijah went up into heaven in a whirlwind" (2 Ki. 2:11) so will believers when "the last trumpet" sounds. While not claiming that Bunyan asserted a *pre-tribulation* Rapture, believers should know that countless pilgrims believed in a Rapture long before anyone coined the term.

41 Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine* (Kansas City, Kansas: Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1942), 7, XXI, p. 124.

42 John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Springdale, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1981), p. 191.

However, belief in a specifically *pre-tribulation* rapture can be traced back more than 1,000 years prior to Bunyan. A Latin manuscript of the sixth century exists which some scholars believe⁴³ can be traced back to a prominent Syrian church father, the prolific Ephraem of Nisibis (306-373 AD). A passage from a sermon on prophecy and the antichrist translates into English as:

"For all the saints and Elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins."⁴⁴

According to this ancient sermon, the events of the end times begin with the rapture, followed by the Great Tribulation and then the Second Coming.

John Bunyan also presents the clearly dispensational theme of the destructive influence of the law on believers today. He writes that the man who would put a Christian under the law would set "thy feet in that way that leadeth unto the administration of death"⁴⁵ referring to Second Corinthians 3:7. In Bunyan's book, "Adam" sent a henchman after a character named "Faithful." Faithful had already been to the cross and was now on his way to the Celestial City. As Faithful told it:

"...I looked behind me, and saw one coming after me, swift as the wind... So soon as the man overtook me, he was but a word and a blow; for down he knocked me, and laid me for dead. But when I was a little come to myself again... he struck me another deadly blow on the breast, and beat me down backward, so I lay at his foot as dead as before. So when I came to myself again, I cried him mercy; but he said, 'I know not how to show mercy;' and with that knocked me down again..."⁴⁶

At that point in the telling of the story, Faithful's companion Christian interrupted him and said:

"That man that overtook you was Moses: he spareth none, neither knoweth he how to show mercy to those that transgress his law."⁴⁷

In this simple encounter Bunyan presents urgent dispensational truth more powerfully than does *The Plot's* Chapter 8 on *The Tree*. For Bunyan to see Israel's leader and their methodology as destructive to Christians, and for him to see clearly the deadly influence of the law upon believers means that he understood some of the rudimentary principles of dispensationalism. He could never develop such an attitude had Bunyan considered that the Gospels and the Old Testament were equally applicable to the Body as is the revelation that Christ gave through Paul to the Body. However, Bunyan never clearly annunciated a dispensational systematic theology and therefore failed to consistently apply the truths he so dearly held. He was, however, familiar enough with the dispensational concept of "house rules" to put the words "the law of the house"⁴⁸ into the mouth of one of his characters.

Bunyan's main character, named "Christian," visits the house of "Interpreter" and sees a painting of the Apostle Paul and he asks Interpreter, "What means this?"

"I have showed thee this picture first, because the man whose picture **this is**, is **the only man whom the Lord** of the place whither thou are going **hath authorised to be thy guide** in all difficult places thou mayest meet with in the way;"⁴⁹

43 Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1985), p. 210. Dr. Alexander is a leading authority on the Syrian fathers.

44 C. P. Caspari, *Briefe, Abhandlungen und Predigten aus den zwei letzten Jahrhunderten des kirchlichen Altertums und dem Anfang des Mittelater* (Christiania, 1890, pp. 208).

45 John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Springdale, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1981), p. 22

46 Ibid. p. 82

47 Ibid. p. 83

48 Ibid. p. 52

49 Ibid. p. 30

Bunyan reveals the identity of the man in the portrait by using Paul's own figurative description of himself as a "*man*" who can "beget children" (1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19).

But why, critics ask, if true, was Paul's personal role in the establishment of the Body of Christ unrecognized by Christians prior to the 19th century?

Such critics believe no sufficient answers exist, and thus they attempt to undermine the only systematic theology that directly resolves almost all of the Bible's apparent doctrinal contradictions. But when was Paul's role first understood? When was his personal authority considered central to the Body?

As church history moved out of the apostolic age, beyond the first and into the second century, Christians quickly lost sight of Paul's special revelation and personal importance in the establishment of the Body. They soon forgot both the uniqueness of Paul's epistles and God's decision to establish the Body of Christ through the Apostle to the Gentiles. However, evidence suggests that believers living just after the close of the New Testament period understood Paul's special authority and personal importance to the Body of Christ.

Polycarp, an early Gentile Christian, fellowshipped with the Apostle John. In 146 AD the Romans murdered Saint Polycarp, who had become the Greek bishop of Smyrna. The first known historical account of a Christian martyr outside of the Bible records how the Romans burned Polycarp to death when he refused to renounce Jesus Christ. Polycarp linked the apostles with the early church fathers. Concerning him, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* states:

By his major writing, *The Letter to the Philippians*, and by his widespread moral authority, Polycarp combated various heretical sects, including certain Gnostic groups that claimed religious salvation exclusively through their arcane spiritual knowledge. Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* contains a classic formulation in which he refutes the Gnostics' argument that God's incarnation in, and the death and Resurrection of, Christ were all imaginary phenomena of purely moral or mythological significance. **More important, however, is the way in which Polycarp referred to the apostle Paul in *The Letter to the Philippians*. Not only does he repeatedly quote from Paul's writings but he also stresses the *personal importance of Paul as a primary authority of the Christian church*.**⁵⁰

Believers would soon forget what Polycarp apparently understood—Paul's personal authority in the nascent Body of Christ. The centuries of the dark ages, when even literacy skills would all but disappear, would come and go before the Body rediscovered its beginnings. But the man history records as the earliest defender of the New Testament, Polycarp bishop of Smyrna, recognized the importance of Paul to a degree which surpassed the understanding of many future generations. Prior to the Plymouth Brethren movement, devoted men like Noah Webster knew the biblical meaning of the term dispensation:

Dispensa'tion, *n.* [L. *dispensatio*. See *Dispense*.] 1. Distribution; the act of dealing out to different persons or places... 2. **The dealing of God to his creatures**; the distribution of good and evil, natural or moral, **in the divine government**.⁵¹

Dispensationalism, including *The Plot*, concerns itself with the question of Jewish religious influence within the Body of Christ. What issues did the first Christian writers address? To save the space otherwise needed to present and analyze the earliest extant Christian documents, an encyclopedic entry will suffice:

According to conventional reckoning, the earliest examples of patristic literature are the writings of the so-called Apostolic Fathers; the name derives from their supposed contacts with the Apostles or the apostolic community. These writings include the church order called the *Didache*, ... the Letter of Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas, ... the First Letter of Clement, the seven letters that Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 110) wrote... [the] Letter to the Philippians by Polycarp of Smyrna (d. c. 156 or 168)... and an ancient homily (sermon) known

50 Ibid. "Polycarp, Saint" *Britannica CD* Version 97. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1997.

51 Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, (New York: S. Converse, 1828)

as the Second Letter of Clement. **They all belong to the late 1st or early 2nd century and were all to a greater or lesser extent influenced (sometimes by way of reaction) by the profoundly Jewish atmosphere that pervaded Christian thinking and practice at this primitive stage.**⁵²

Sadly, the budding Body of Christ misunderstood the dynamics of this issue and resolved it in unbiblical and racist ways. *The Plot* and dispensationalism in general both focus directly on this issue: the proper relationship between Circumcision and Uncircumcision. Thus detractors somewhat oversimplify when they call dispensationalism a late development. The earliest Christians attended to this same issue, one which today's authors have either forgotten or believe superfluous. Perhaps modern teachers believe that the Body so thoroughly and correctly understands this issue, that it no longer requires attention. How often, for example, do Sunday School lessons cover the topic of circumcision? While the Bible addresses that topic extensively, this rite gets almost no popular coverage. Rather than calling it a late development, men could more accurately call dispensationalism Christianity's belated devotion to resolving its earliest struggles. Sometimes children must finish their fathers' work.

Regarding Extremists from the 1830s

Since the first century, the first man credited with popularizing dispensational ideas like the Rapture and the strict division between Israel and the Church is John Nelson Darby of the Plymouth Brethren. Critics expose the excesses and distortions of Darby and his contemporaries in another fledgling group, the Catholic Apostolic Church (from which the Charismatic Movement arose). Covenant theologians (anti-dispensational, replacement types) put forth eccentricities of early dispensationalists as evidence against dispensationalism. Men have long realized, though, that ideas are not responsible for the people who hold them. Darby, though an indefatigable evangelist (as admitted by his foes) and a brilliant expositor, also had a cutting tongue and a "control problem" second to none. He ruled hundreds of assemblies with an iron fist excommunicating those who disagreed with him on even minor points. He also prohibited fellowship with entire congregations which refused to excommunicate those who had briefly visited with excommunicated dissenters. And then Darby excommunicated assemblies which fellowshiped with any from those congregations. In one anecdote, when Dwight L. Moody failed to understand a point Darby told an onlooker, "I am here to supply exposition, not brains."⁵³

However, neither eccentricity nor even iniquity disqualify a man's *teaching*. Personal sin might disqualify the man, but not his teaching. The alternative precludes acceptance of any teaching, since men of all stripes adhere to all sorts of ideas, true and false. The world knows of Abraham's shame, King David's wickedness, Peter's denial, Paul's murder, and Luther's anti-Semitism. Thankfully nonetheless, Martin Luther rediscovered and popularized the lost doctrine of *justification by faith*. If Christians could obscure the central tenet of the Gospel, why could they not lose track of the prophetic timeline? For the Body to misplace the knowledge of *salvation by faith* boggles the mind far beyond its confusion over the dispensational outline of the Bible. And if men criticize the Rapture discoverers for being kooky, then how about Luther for anti-Semitism and his suggestion of concentration camps for the Jews?⁵⁴

In 1525 Martin Luther claimed in the preface to his *Deutsche Messe* that unity among Christians could come only from the Latin Mass. Speaking of what Luther might call the "near-sacrament" of auricular confession, he wrote:

52 Ibid. "Christianity, The Apostolic Fathers." *Britannica CD*. Version 97. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1997.

53 W. G. Turner, *John Nelson Darby* (London: C. A. Hammond, 1951), p. 21.

54 Martin Luther, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [Critical Collection in 107 volumes] (Weimar Edition), Volume 53, p. 523ff.