

## A REPLY TO DAVID RAUSCH'S "FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE JEW"

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In the June 1980 issue of *JETS* there appeared an article by David Rausch entitled "Fundamentalism and the Jew: An Interpretive Essay," which criticized what the author believes are unwarranted and inaccurate portrayals of the historic relationship between Jews and fundamentalists. In his discussion Rausch claimed that my *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1925* (Oxford, 1979) "epitomizes" those works that attack fundamentalism for its support of Zionism on the one hand and then accuse it of latent anti-Semitism on the other.<sup>1</sup>

Writers of history expect criticism. As one of my teachers used to say, "The study of history is an argument without end." And so it is: Write a book, take your chances. In the year since its publication my book has been reviewed over twenty times. Most reviewers have been overwhelmingly gracious in their remarks, though a few have taken me to task for one thing or another. Some of these criticisms have been well founded, and I have learned from them. Not until Rausch, however, has any reviewer seriously misrepresented my views. Since, I may assume, most readers of Rausch's article will not take the time to read my book, it is necessary for me to clarify my position.

Nowhere in his article did Rausch substantiate the charge that I attack fundamentalism for its support of Zionism. In the chapter that I devote to this issue,<sup>2</sup> I argue that premillennialist eschatology programmed its adherents to be the friends of Israel. Since Jews played such an important role in their end-times expectations, premillennialists paid them close and even affectionate attention.

During most of the nineteenth century premillennialists predicted the restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land. On occasion they even tried to help things along. In 1891, for example, they petitioned President Benjamin Harrison to lead a diplomatic drive to "give Palestine back to [the Jews] again." When Theodor Herzl founded Zionism in 1897, most premillennialists hailed the act as the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and became enthusiastic supporters of the Zionist cause. Some premillennialists, such as William E. Blackstone, actually joined the movement and were honored by Jews for their loyal support.

I further relate how premillennialists built bridges between Christians and Jews, engaged in sincere and unprejudiced Jewish evangelism, condemned European anti-Semitism, and in general stood for Jewish rights when few others seemed to care. Nowhere in my presentation is there anything that can be legiti-

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<sup>1</sup>*JETS* 23/2 (1980) 105.

<sup>2</sup>"Hath God Cast Away His People?" in T. P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford University, 1979) 128-157.

mately labelled "an attack." My purpose for writing was to describe the effects of premillennialism on Jewish/Christian relations, not to attack or endorse them. It is not surprising, then, that Rausch offers no evidence to substantiate his charge. There is none.

More central to Rausch's article is the claim that I accuse fundamentalism of latent anti-Semitism. Again, Rausch has not fairly or accurately presented my position. As far as he goes, Rausch quoted me correctly:

Yet there was an ironic ambivalence in the premillennialist attitude toward Jews. On the one hand, Jews were God's chosen people and heirs to the promises; but their rejection of Jesus as Messiah placed them in open rebellion against God and ensured their eventual rendezvous with Antichrist during the great tribulation. The glory of Israel was still in the future; in the meantime, Jews were under the power of Satan and were playing their assigned role in the decline of the present age. From that perspective, Jews deserved the scorn of premillennialists as well as their sympathy. Accordingly, at times premillennialists sounded anti-Semitic. Despite their claims that anti-Semitism was a gross and unexcusable sin against God, some leaders of the movement acted like representatives of American anti-Semitism.<sup>3</sup>

But he failed to mention the important qualifiers that precede and follow the section: "Premillennialists, therefore, were fierce opponents of anti-Semitism in any form, and they frequently called themselves the friends of Israel" and "in the end, the premillennialist vision for the Jews was positive, and their support for Israel was uncompromised."<sup>4</sup> By omitting the full context of my remarks, Rausch gave a distorted view of my total position.

Furthermore, it should be noted that I do not directly accuse anyone of being an anti-Semite. As Rausch observed, I chose my words very carefully: "Accordingly, at times premillennialists *sounded* anti-Semitic . . . and *acted like* representatives of American anti-Semitism" (italics added). It is not splitting semantic hairs to point out that "sounding" and "acting like" are not the same thing as actually "being."

Rausch's main concern is to correct what he believes is an unjust and unsubstantiated charge that Arno C. Gaebelein was anti-Semitic. I am happy to clear up any possible misunderstanding: I have never believed nor accused Arno Gaebelein of anti-Semitism. In fact, throughout my chapter I portray Gaebelein in an extremely favorable light. I summarize his evangelistic ministry in New York City, note his love for and effectiveness with Jews, and show him as the champion for Jewish rights against those Christians who wanted to "gentilize" them after their conversions. Though Rausch never acknowledges my positive reading of Gaebelein's ministry, I assume that he does not object to it. He does, however, take issue with my treatment of Gaebelein's response to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.<sup>5</sup>

Allegedly the secret plans of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy to undermine civil authority, destroy Christianity and take over the international economy, the *Protocols* originated in Russia in the early twentieth century and quickly became a

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 154, 157.

<sup>5</sup>JETS 23/2 (1980) 108-109, 112.

mainstay of anti-Semitic campaigns in Europe and America after World War I.<sup>6</sup> Premillennialists were aware of the *Protocols* and for the most part accepted their validity.

Concerning Gaebelein's response to the *Protocols*, I wrote as follows:

When Henry Ford published excerpts of the *Protocols* in his *Dearborn Independent*, Arno Gaebelein welcomed the disclosures, remarking that "all true Jews will be grateful for an exposé like the one published by the *Independent*." Observing that "there is nothing so vile on earth as an apostate Jew who denies God and His Word," he noted how many Jews owned liquor trusts and how many robbers and lawbreakers had Jewish last names. Gaebelein declared that such activity was clearly predicted in the Bible, but added that not all Jews were involved.<sup>7</sup>

I am hard pressed to see how anyone could deny that Gaebelein "sounded" anti-Semitic in that statement. Nor am I able to see how Rausch's additional quotations from Gaebelein lead to any other conclusions. In another statement on the *Protocols*, Gaebelein admitted that

they certainly laid out a path for the revolutionary Jews that has been strictly and literally followed. That the Jew has been a prominent factor in the revolutionary movements of the day, wherever they may have occurred, cannot truthfully be denied, any more than that it was a Jew who assassinated, with all his family, the former Autocrat of all the Russians; or than that a very large majority (said to be over 80%) of the present Bolshevik government in Moscow, are Jews: while along other lines, in the assembly of the League of Nations, the Jew's voice is heard, and it is by no means a plaintive, timid, or uninfluential one—the Jew is the coming man!<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, I am not convinced that the "scandal" of such remarks is alleviated by the rejoinder that Gaebelein assumed that only "apostate Jews" were involved. While he believed that some Jews were better than others (the Orthodox) and that some Jews could be saved before Christ's return (thus his involvement in Jewish evangelism), as a premillennialist Gaebelein was also convinced that the Jewish people *as a whole* had turned their backs on the Lord's Christ and were bound to play a significant role in the rise and reign of Antichrist.

Gaebelein, it should be noted, was not the only premillennialist to view the *Protocols* in this manner. For instance, writing in the Bible Institute of Los Angeles' *The King's Business*, Charles C. Cook concluded that the *Protocols* were authentic and then added the following:

The Jewish race is morally fully capable of doing all that is charged against it. It is at present rejected of God, and in a state of disobedience and rebellion. . . . As a race Jews are gifted far beyond all other peoples, and even in their turn, with the curse of God upon them, are in the front rank of achievement; but accompanying traits are pride, overbearing arrogance, inordinate love for material things, trickery, rudeness, and an egotism that taxes the superlatives of any language. Oppressed are they? Indeed, and subject to injustice more than any other race, and yet never

<sup>6</sup>For an excellent study of the *Protocols* controversy see N. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (New York: Harper, 1966).

<sup>7</sup>Weber, *Living*, 154-155.

<sup>8</sup>A. C. Gaebelein in *Our Hope* 27 (April 1921) 601, quoted by Rausch in *JETS* 23/2 (1980) 108.

learning the lesson of true humility. . . . There is a reason for his being persona non grata at resorts and in the best society; who can deny it?<sup>9</sup>

I am personally saddened that men of such integrity saw fit to endorse the validity of the *Protocols* at a time when they were being used for such anti-Semitic purposes. The historian's task is to account for such admittedly out-of-character comments. How could men with such consistently pro-Jewish careers sound so anti-Jewish in their appraisal of the *Protocols*?

Rausch does not adequately account for Gaebelein's behavior. He apparently wants to overlook it in light of Gaebelein's lifelong service to the Jews: "Whatever derogatory information one gleans from these few statements, they are abundantly offset by a vast array of positive statements and indications of love for the Jewish people."<sup>10</sup> That is certainly true, but historians must do more than merely balance positive and negative factors in their analyses. They must somehow explain inconsistencies, not eliminate them.

How then should we account for this "ironic ambivalence" in the premillennialist attitude toward the Jews? I argue that it is rooted in the premillennialist eschatology, not the premillennialist character. Most premillennialists believed that God had temporarily suspended his dealings with Israel because of its rejection of Messiah. During the "times of the Gentiles," unconverted Jews were in a state of rebellion against God and would support the coming Antichrist. But that was not the end of the premillennialist vision. After their sufferings during the great tribulation the Jews will finally turn to Messiah Jesus and once again occupy a central position in God's plan for history. Eventually Israel will be saved and will receive all the divine promises.

In short, premillennialists saw in the *Protocols* a recognizable scenario for the last days. The alleged conspiracy meshed remarkably well with the outlines of their expectations. As James M. Gray, president of Moody Bible Institute, observed, "the *Protocols* are a clinching argument for premillennialism and another sign of the possible nearness of the end of the age."<sup>11</sup> Throughout their history premillennialists have been rather susceptible to conspiracy theories of history. In turn they have seen Catholic, Jewish and communist conspiracies at work, while at present they are prone to identify Arab oil cartels or the Trilateral Commission as worldwide conspirators.<sup>12</sup> During the historical period under question, however, the *Protocols* seemed to fill the prophetic bill. Thus premillennialists' prophetic views enabled them to give credence to the *Protocols* (and thereby sound anti-Semitic) even though they had been and remained staunch opponents of anti-Semitism.

In conclusion, then, it should be apparent that I neither attacked fundamentalism for its support of Zionism nor accused it of latent anti-Semitism. Along with Rausch I believe that the historically cordial relations between Jews and

<sup>9</sup>C. C. Cook, "The International Jew," *The King's Business* 12 (November 1921) 1087, quoted in Weber, *Living*, 155.

<sup>10</sup>*JETS* 23/2 (1980) 109.

<sup>11</sup>J. M. Gray, "The Jewish Protocols," *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* 22 (October 1921) 598, quoted in Weber, *Living*, 155-156.

<sup>12</sup>For instance see H. Lindsey, *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* (King of Prussia, PA: Westgate, 1980) 129-142.

fundamentalists have often been distorted and ignored by historians. In its own way, my *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming* tried to correct this oversight. Though I heartily endorse Rausch's attempt to set the record straight, I am sorry that he chose to do so at my expense without being especially precise in the way he related my views.