

## NOTE

Barbara Tuchman comments concerning the British government's reasons for issuing the Balfour Declaration of 1917:

*In Balfour the motive was Biblical rather than imperial. If the Biblical culture of England can be said to have any meaning in England's redemption of Palestine from the rule of Islam, it may be epitomised in Balfour. Though he was the reverse of Shaftesbury, not ardent but a sceptic, not a religious enthusiast but a philosophical pessimist, he was nevertheless strongly infused, like the Evangelicals and the Puritans, with the Hebraism of the Bible.*

*Long before he ever heard of Zionism Balfour, steeped in the Bible from childhood, had felt a particular interest in the 'people of the Book'. ("Bible and Sword")*

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Learn more about the Jewish roots of your Christian faith. You can obtain tapes, books etc which can be passed on to others, or shared in a group situation.

Christian Friends of Israel UK have a wide range of Judaic-Christian study materials available, including audio tapes, articles, books, and videos.)

Please write to CFI UK at the address below if you require details of the full range of available resources, or check our website.

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## DENYING OUR ROOTS

It was astounding to read the following comment in an evangelical magazine, as part of an article discussing the Judaism of Jesus' day: "The Pharisees, who were the 'separate ones', or those who had dedicated themselves to holiness, were offended at him, for as a class they were hypocrites. The scribes, who copied scripture, and were so scrupulous in so doing, hated Him. The whole religious hierarchy, with but a few exceptions, was made up of men of a **dry, arid, and barren religion.**"

One would have hoped, in view of the vast amount of work being done to bring about a correct understanding of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith and the New Testament, that such remarks were a thing of the past.

Whatever may be said of the leaders of the Judaism of Jesus' day they certainly were not men of "a dry, arid and barren religion".

The Judaism of Jesus' day was still a living biblical faith, and Jesus shared fully in that Jewish faith. There seems little doubt that Jesus lived as an orthodox Jewish man, and indeed traveled and was accepted as an orthodox Jewish rabbi. It may also be reasonably shown that Jesus wore a *tallit* (or prayer shawl) with *tzitziyot* (fringes), and the phylacteries worn by all religious Jews of his day. While he undoubtedly condemned hypocrisy in the nation's religious leaders (as similarly we would do today) he never dismissed the faith of his contemporaries as "dry, arid and barren".

It was indeed out of this soil that a living, believing community (the Church) arose by the power of the Holy Spirit. The early Church was fully Jewish, and we read in Acts that countless thousands orthodox Jewish people, including priests, became believers, yet remained within their Jewish faith.

It is true that a majority of Jews did not recognise Jesus as the One who was to come. However, it would be unfair and inaccurate to describe mainstream first century Judaism - or, for that matter, Judaism today - as

dry and arid. Anyone who has sought to understand the heart of orthodox Judaism today, and come to know those who live in this way, will discover anything but a barren religion.

Christianity grew out of such soil and it behoves us to remember the warning of Paul: ***“Do not boast against the branches for you do not support the root, but the root supports you”*** (Romans 11:18). The whole thrust of Romans 11 is that we should value and esteem the ground from which our faith has sprung.

The branch, which denies its roots, must inevitably shrivel and die. This, no doubt, is the force of the warning given by Paul ***“...lest you also be cut off”*** (v.22). Thankfully, very many are experiencing enrichment, and a deeper understanding of God and the Lord Jesus, as they gratefully recognise the Jewish roots of their faith.

It is however not only a matter of personal loss or enrichment. It concerns also the mutual experience and destiny of both Israel and the Church.

Not only is the Church deeply indebted to Israel and the Jewish people, but Israel at this time needs the true Church - her prayers, love and support. It is salutary to note that high points in the experience and blessing of the Church have often been paralleled by times of special blessing for Israel. The great and dominant theme in the prophetic scriptures is the latter-day restoration of Israel to her land - and ultimately to the Lord - and this seems to be linked with the restoration of the Church to the level of Divine life and blessing intended by God for her.

Take, for example, the so-called Second Evangelical Awakening of the nineteenth century (also known as the 1859 Revival). This was the most far-reaching revival of the Church in the West in recent centuries, and even greater in magnitude and results than that under George Whitfield, and John and Charles Wesley in the eighteenth century.

The Awakening began in the USA (New York) towards the end of 1857, and as a result some one million new believers were added to the American churches. It soon spread to Ulster and thence to mainland England,

Scotland and Wales. It is estimated that, in the following two years, one million came to true repentance and faith in Christ and were added to the various churches this side of the Atlantic.

The practical results of this revival are also impressive. Dr Barnardo's and Fegan's homes for orphans, the Salvation Army and its great philanthropic work, the Keswick Convention, the Children's Special Service Mission, and Hudson Taylor's launching of the China Inland Mission all found their roots and impetus in this Awakening.

It is interesting that the following years also saw very significant events concerning the restoration of the Jewish people to their land. In 1879 Eliezer Ben Yehuda advocated a national rebirth in Palestine, and in 1884 launched his Hebrew newspaper. The First Aliya was led by small groups of *Chovevie Zion* (Lovers of Zion), the first consisting of 14 members who arrived in Jaffa on 6th July 1882. By 1884 six settlements had been established. By 1903, the end of the First Aliya period (1882-1903), a score of new villages had been founded.

Herzl published *“Der Judenstaat”* (“The Jewish State”) in 1896, and the following year organised the first Zionist Congress in Basel (Switzerland), concerning which he said: “I founded the Jewish state in 1897. so that God's promised final restoration of Israel may not be hindered.”

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## REFERENCES

1. “The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain” Dr J. Edwin Orr (1949)
2. “Bible and Sword - How the British came to Palestine” Barbara Tuchman (1956)