For most of my Christian life, I was committed to a system of biblical interpretation known as Dispensationalism. Key tenets of that system include a premillennial eschatology, a pretribulational rapture of the saints, a future and physical restoration of ethnic Israel as God’s chosen people, and a commitment to a (generally) wooden-literal hermeneutic.[1] As I eventually started having doubts about the integrity of Dispensationalism’s “unified interpretive scheme”[2] and was concerned that perhaps Dispensationalists were unwittingly imposing a grand scenario on the Bible justified only by the use of a faulty hermeneutic, I nevertheless found it difficult to escape the futurists’ fold out of fear that I would be branded an “anti-Semite”.

An old tactic for a new narrative

The Dispensationalists had a tendency to capitalize on the fact that even if their interpretive scheme had been shown to be flawed, a broad-brush brandishing of skeptics with the label “anti-Semite” would suffice to quench the opposition, or at least get such dissenters to quietly and hopelessly pass on any further discussion.

I am not suggesting that all Dispensationalists engaged in this sort of behavior, and I am certain that some of our Dispensational brethren didn’t necessarily use this method of attack simply to shutdown criticism, but may have actually believed that those who didn’t concede their “literal” interpretation must be harboring some underlying disdain for Jews.

Due to Dispensationalism’s diminishing popularity, some younger Christians might not be familiar with the tactic to which I am referring. Following are a few examples.

In the book, *Judgment Day*, under the subheading, “A guilt shared by the world”, Dave Hunt writes that

> *“We are able to provide only a small amount of the documentation to demonstrate the evil of anti-Semitism and the fact that* ***the whole world is guilty****….”[3]*
>
> *“…The false teaching that the church has replaced Israel [is] a Roman Catholic doctrine. This form of* ***anti-Semitism is also promoted by evangelicals****.”[4]*

He goes on to say that

> *"It is astonishing how many who claim to be Christians apparently have no fear of the God of the Bible and of Israel. They are not afraid to flaunt their denigration of Israel in the face of the Creator of the universe….[5]*
>
> ***It could rightly be said that one's attitude toward Israel…defines whether or not one is a truly biblical Christian**.[6]*
>
> *…There are…professing Christians who say that today's Israel has neither prophetic significance nor divine legitimacy…. They must either repent or be punished for their opposition to what the prophets have foretold."[7]*
>
> *"In the final analysis, the battle over Israel is a battle for the souls and destiny of mankind. If Islam and the nations siding with her should accomplish their goal of destroying Israel, then mankind is eternally lost. This is how serious the battle is!"[8]*

Michael Vlach does not belabor the point as Hunt does, but is still careful to "acknowledge that anti-Jewish sentiments have often greased the pole on the slide toward replacement theology".

> *"It is undeniable that anti-Jewish bias has often gone hand in hand with the supersessionist view, and it has influenced in a negative way how many view the OT and Israel."[9]*

Contributors to *Lighthouse Trails Research Journal* have also engaged in this tactic:

> *"When you go against Israel…you are going against the Messiah who created Israel to be a blessing to all nations."[10]*
>
> *"…Much of the church, to their own shame, no longer believes in the nation's relevance today. It is Satan, of course, who has instigated hatred and anti-Semitism*

> *towards the Jewish people throughout the centuries….*
>
> *Replacement Theology and its antagonistic view of Israel is perpetuating an anti-Semitic stance within the church."[11]*

More recently, the *Lighthouse Trails* editors issued a statement concerning the organization's position with regard to "Israel and the Jews" which includes the following:

> *"We reject and detest every form of anti-Semitism (which we are shockingly seeing growing strongly within the evangelical church today)."[12]*

This deceptive and dishonest tactic has been employed even at the academic level. In a 2007 Paternoster publication, Paul Wilkinson, writing in reference to the "supersessionist" view, says that

> *"Theologically this delegitimises [sic] the Jewish people and the Jewish State, and helps to foster anti-Semitism in the Church."[13]*

Wilkinson says that covenant theology is in large part responsible for "preparing the ground for much of the anti-Semitism of the Middle Ages."[14]

Related to Dispensationalists' disingenuous contention that covenant theology is intimately linked to anti-Semitism, I would note another major error resultant from their hermeneutical method and eschatological presuppositions. The Dispensationalists' mishandling of Scripture exposed their obsession with the "Jewish race", subverting both the markedly spiritual nature and ethno-transcendency of the New Covenant. Ernest Sandeen explains that

> *"…Millenarian interest in the restoration of the Jews stemmed explicitly from the interpretation of prophecy…. The millenarian…prayed for the coming of both [the second advent and the restoration of the Jews], and, if he could not work for the accomplishment of the second advent, did what he could to aid the cause of*

> *Palestinian resettlement. Some of this interest appears lunatic in retrospect, such as the many reports of the discovery of the ten lost tribes among the American Indians or in Kashmir, but there can be no question that the millenarian movement played a significant role in preparing the British for political Zionism."[15]*

One can easily see the flow (and the invalidity) of the argument: *To reject such an interpretation of prophecy means to reject Zionism, and to reject Zionism means you are an anti-Semite*. Even Wilkinson, himself an ardent Dispensationalist, seems to have no reservation about the fact that

> *"[Arno] Gaebelein and his associate, Ernest Stroeter, revolutionised [sic] Christian outreach to the Jews by insisting that those who received Jesus as their Messiah did not have to 'Gentilise', **but could retain their Jewish identity**. By adopting Jewish symbols, meeting on the Sabbath [Saturday], and incorporating Jewish feasts into their Christian liturgy, Gaebelein and Stroeter '**promoted the idea that the acceptance of the Christian faith was compatible with the Jewish faith', and represented the 'fulfillment of one's Jewish destiny.'"**[16]*

When confronted with these Dispensational talking points, two questions are in order:

1) Have Dispensationalists who charge all dissenters from their system of interpretation honestly interacted with the biblical and theological arguments put forth by covenant theologians? Or have they opted to engage in logical fallacies so as to tar and feather those who might raise a legitimate objection to their eschatological scenario?

2) Is one's "Jewish identity" as established according to the abrogated Mosaic Covenant truly relevant within the context of the New Covenant? Is the Christian faith—which depends on belief in the gospel, the finished work of Christ for the salvation of God's elect from every nation tribe and tongue—really "compatible with the Jewish faith"? Does the retention of ethno-centric traditions, only some of which may even find their origins in the Mosaic Covenant, "represent the fulfillment of one's Jewish destiny"?

Since Dispensationalism is not quite the reigning paradigm within evangelicalism that it once was, it should be fairly easy even for race-obsessed neo-Calvinists at The Gospel

Coalition and professors at Southern Seminary to recognize the problems with the Christian Zionists’ theology and their irresponsible and indiscriminate charges of anti-Semitism.

But the irony is obviously lost on them.

Logical fallacies

How have we in the reformed camp responded to charges of anti-Semitism and the futurists’ Judeo-centric eschatology? For one thing, we have attempted to explain to these brethren that “replacement theology” and “supersessionism” are strawmen. They are terms found predominantly in the Dispensationalists’ literature and are almost always used as pejoratives. As defined by Dispensationalists, such terms generally do not represent covenant theologians’ arguments with great accuracy. Confessionally reformed Christians do not make the claims that Dispensationalists often allege of us about the church “replacing” Israel, or about God changing His mind and taking away promises from ethnic Jews and giving them to gentile Christians. Multiplied volumes are available from both the Presbyterian and Baptist perspectives which carefully expound our respective views of covenant theology. Nevertheless, our theological arguments have largely been ignored since it’s much easier to misrepresent or slander your opponent than it is to honestly interact with their interpretation of Scripture.

Concerning the charge of “anti-Semitism”, attempts to explain to our futurist friends that our embrace of covenant theology is not motivated by a hatred of Jews have typically fallen on deaf ears. Again, it is more effective to charge reformed theologians with racism than it is to work through the biblical and theological framework and hermeneutical principles which undergird our position.

As a committed Dispensationalist myself for many years, I was certainly conditioned to think in such terms. In fact, it became my own knee-jerk reaction to fellow Christians who questioned the prophetic significance of the modern state of Israel or disagreed with the presumption that the OT should be determinative in the interpretation of the NT.[17] Whether I vocalized it or not, I would think to myself, “such a person must be hanging on to some unrepentant anti-Semitism in his heart since he doesn’t believe in the prophetic significance of 1948”, for example.

Is it fair and honest to brand all non-Dispensationalists anti-Semites, ignoring both our

critique of the Dispensational hermeneutic and our covenantal arguments out of hand? Or, is it perhaps more accurate that “the Jews” merely occupy an indispensable piece of the puzzle within the Dispensationalists’ narrative? According to Israeli-American scholar Gershom Gorenberg,

> *“…Christian Zionists ‘don’t love real Jewish people. They love us as characters in their story, in their play….’”[18]*

Now let us consider these questions: Do “blacks” merely occupy an indispensable piece of the puzzle within the social justice narrative? Are they likewise encouraged to maintain their “black” identity despite their membership in the New Covenant where such a superficial distinction has no relevance (Col. 3)? It should be more than clear that such the same weapons are being wielded by those in the social justice camp, and our left-leaning brethren are often insulated from having to actually interact with our arguments. Like the Dispensationalists before them, these “evangelical progressives” have weaponized racism, perpetuated a victimhood mentality, and emphasized the very ethnic distinctives that God had explicitly dissolved within the bounds of the New Covenant.

No one would deny that racism still exists. However, plans to eradicate all traces of racism among billions of unregenerate children of Adam only exist in the safe space of the SJW’s infantile imagination. The existence of racism in a sin-cursed world is acknowledged, but sweeping generalizations, strawmen, *ad hominem* arguments and fallacies of induction must be exposed as invalid and illegitimate attempts to label everyone and everything racist.

How have the advocates of The Narrative responded when allegations of systemic white racial superiority are met with well-reasoned resistance? By responding with another logical fallacy, of course! Changing the definition of a word midway through an argument is known as equivocation. And once again, the Zionists employed the same strategy.

> *“We recognize that Europe is not free of the scourge of anti-Semitism. No one would deny that there are still some virulent autochthonous anti-Semites in Europe (as there are in the United States), but their numbers are small and their extreme views are rejected by the vast majority of Europeans….*
>
> *When pressed to go beyond vague assertions, pro-Israel groups now claim that*

> *there is a ‘new anti-Semitism,’ which they equate with criticism of Israel.”**[19]*

The term, “anti-Semitism”, no longer denotes hatred for Jewish people, but has been broadened to include any criticism of a particular political entity in the Middle East. Under the heading, “The Great Silencer”, Mearsheimer and Walt expound on the power of the label “anti-Semitism” (embedded with its new meaning) and its ability to shut down any and all criticism from those who oppose the Israel Lobby:

> *“…The charge of anti-Semitism remains a widely used weapon for dealing with critics of Israel, especially in the United States. This tactic has been effective for a number of reasons. First, anti-Semitism is a set of beliefs that led to great evils in the past, including the monstrous crimes of the Holocaust, and it is now utterly discredited in most segments of society.* ***The charge of anti-Semitism is one of the most powerful epithets one can level at someone in America, and no respectable person wants to be tarred with that brush****. Undoubtedly, the fear of being called an anti-Semite discourages many individuals from voicing reservations about Israel’s conduct or the merits of U.S. support.*
>
> *Second, smearing critics of Israel or the lobby with* ***the charge of anti-Semitism works to marginalize them in the public arena. If the accusation sticks, the critic’s arguments will not be taken seriously****….*
>
> *Third, this tactic works because it is difficult for anyone to prove beyond all doubt that he or she is not anti-Semitic, especially when criticizing Israel or the lobby. Proving a negative is hard to do under any circumstances, especially when it comes to something like intentions and motivations that cannot be observed directly…. The charge of anti-Semitism has been a potent way to make sure that criticisms of Israel or the lobby were rarely spoken and were either ignored or disparaged when they were.”**[20]*

Does this tactic sound familiar yet? They continue:

> *“[The holocaust] has become a key element of American Jewish consciousness. It defines how many American Jews think about the world around them, and not*

> *surprisingly,* ***it has fostered a powerful sense of victimization for some of them****. Despite the great success Jews have achieved in America, many Jewish Americans still worry that virulent anti-Semitism could return at any time…. Frank Rich, the New York Times columnist, acknowledges this thinking when he writes, ‘Like many other Jews,* ***I am perhaps all too willing to believe that the entire world is anti-Semitic****.’”[21]*

We won’t get fooled again

As I have attempted to show by citing both Christian and non-Christian sources, one of the most effective tools employed by Dispensationalists and other political or religious Zionist groups has been to denounce all opposing parties by charging them with anti-Semitism regardless of the theology or political philosophy at hand, thereby relegating such rebels to the outer-fringes of civilized society and unworthy to hold a seat at the table in the exchange of ideas. Lest one think I have exaggerated either the employment or effectiveness of this tactic, consider the insanely convoluted arguments and misrepresentations put forth by self-appointed Christian discernment expert Brannon Howse as recently as October 14, 2019 in this video.

Howse hates Calvinism and loves Dispensationalism. In the video, he states says that Calvinism is a theological cult that teaches justification by works and is part of the Great Apostasy. He insists that “replacement theology is a hotbed for anti-Semitism”. And, since reformed theology holds to both Calvinism and covenant theology, Howse concludes that

> *“If you don’t agree with anti-Zionism, if you don’t agree with anti-Semitism, if you don’t agree with replacement theology…then you need to quit calling yourself a Calvinist”.*

Conclusion

This post is not intended to spark debate over religious or political support for Israel. I have simply attempted to show that the same logical fallacies and Great Silencer[22] of slander

employed for decades by Dispensationalists and Zionists of varying stripes are tools just as integral to the defense of the social justice narrative. While our "young, restless and reformed" or New Calvinist brethren have displayed their embarrassment of Dispensationalism's integration into American evangelicalism, they are clearly not embarrassed to employ the very same weapons of our Fundamentalist forebears.

But misology and slander are not fitting for the Christian. I have been on that side of the fence. I was held captive to that system in part because of statements like those quoted earlier: "It could rightly be said that one's attitude toward Israel…defines whether or not one is a truly biblical Christian."[23] Now we are being told that because of their attitude toward slavery, Jonathan Edwards, John Whitefield and Robert. L. Dabney were not truly Christians, and that white evangelicals who refuse to allow critical race theory to shape their worldview never had the gospel.

The progressives were more cunning than any beast of the field and knew that even if their Marxist ideology had flaws, brandishing skeptics with the label "racist" would be enough to scare their opposition into submission or at least get us to give up on any attempt to rationalize with the irrational. We are at the point now where everyone and everything is racist. Obesity is racist. Time is racist. Firehoses are racist, and even Bibles are racist, because there weren't enough black translators.

My rejection of postmodernism, critical race theory, intersectionality and all such subversive ideologies does not make me a "racist" any more than my rejection of Dispensationalism makes me an anti-Semite. Some of us oppose the Marxist component undergirding the social justice narrative and have no time for slanderous shenanigans intended to strike fear into the hearts of those who dare to oppose the reigning paradigm. Such sinister tactics are the lifeblood of pragmatic politicians and Marxist religious hirelings quick to categorize as "racist" any challenging counterpoint to their unjust policies or unbiblical doctrine. I won't fall for that trick this time, and neither should you.

[1] This "wooden literalism" ,or letterism, was quite inconsistent. See my Letter to the editor: Concerning Hebert and Humphreys' eschatological presuppositions and "literal interpretation", *Creation Research Society Quarterly* **54**(4):272-275, 2018.

[2] Erickson, M.J., *Christian Theology* (2nd ed.), Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 1998, p. 1168.

[3] Hunt, D., *Judgment Day: Islam, Israel and the Nations*, The Berean Call, Bend, OR, 2005 p. 39.

[4] Hunt, p. 45.

[5] Hunt, p. 244.

[6] Hunt, p. 246.

[7] Hunt, p. 247.

[8] Hunt, p. 305.

[9] Vlach, H., *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation*, B&H Publishing, Nashville, TN, pp. 5-6.

[10] Oppenheimer, M., ‘Israel: Replacing what God has not’, *Lighthouse Trails Research Journal* 1(5):13, 2013.

[11] Oppenheimer, p. 14.

[12] LT Editors, ‘What Lighthouse Trails believes about Israel and the Jews’, *Lighthouse Trails Research Journal* 5(4):18, 2017.

[13] Wilkinson, P.R., *For Zion’s Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby*, Paternoster, Great Britain, 2007, p. 18.

[14] Wilkinson, p. 43.

[15] Sandeen, E.R., *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British & American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970, pp. 11-12.

[16] Wilkinson, p. 254.

[17] See Downing, W.R., *Theological Propaedeutic*, PIRS Publications, Morgan Hill, CA,

2010, p. 266.

[18] As cited in Mearsheimer, J. and Walt, S., *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2007, p. 137.

[19] Mearsheimer and Walt, p. 189.

[20] Mearsheimer and Walt, pp. 191-92.

[21] Mearsheimer and Walt, p. 192.

[22] Mearsheimer and Walt, p. 191.

[23] Hunt, p. 246.

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