

UK BIBLE STUDENTS NEWSLETTER

December 22, 2008

Land of Hope and Glory

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. . . . For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God ([Hebrews 11: 8, 10](#)).

Notwithstanding the prevalent tendency of the British population at large to appear cynical and suspicious of sentiment, there are evidences that a romantic idealism still lurks under the surface. The euphoria on the last night of the [Promenade Concerts](#) in the [Royal Albert Hall](#) is an evidence of this surviving sentiment, when all raise their voices and their flags to join in [Edward Elgar](#)'s Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1, known in Britain as "Land of Hope and Glory", the patriotic chorus that has long been a firm favourite in these islands. The words are by Arthur Christopher Benson, 1861-1925. (The melody, without lyrics, is better known in Canada and the United States as the accompaniment for high-school graduation ceremonies.) [\[continue reading\]](#)

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Is Christianity Good for the World?

This provocative question serves as the title both for a book and a series of debates, sponsored by [Christianity Today](#). Christopher Hitchens^[fn1] and Douglas Wilson are the joint authors and recently appeared together in several cities in the United States to give their answers.

Hitchens, a British journalist, writer, and commentator, who now lives in the United States, does not mince words. 'It is to me', he writes, 'an appalling thought that anyone could wish for a supreme and absolute and unalterable ruler, whose reign was unchallengeable, who required incessant propitiation, and who kept us all under continual surveillance, waking and sleeping, which did not even cease (and which indeed even intensified) after our deaths.'^[fn2] He regards the crucifixion of Christ as 'the torture and death of a single individual in a backward part of the Middle East'.

Wilson is a pastor of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho, and a Senior Fellow at New Saint Andrews College. It is the attitude and spirit of thankfulness, he insists, which must lie at the heart of the question of God's existence. 'On the one hand, if there is no God, there is no need to thank anyone. We are here as the result of a long chain of impersonal processes, grinding their way down to our brief moment in time.'

The two protagonists appeared in October at Westminster Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania. Each spoke in turn, responding to the position of the other. Regardless of their fundamentally opposite doctrines, the two men appear to be reconciled to each other, having spent days together travelling from one venue to another. Our correspondent reports that the exchange between the two men was civil, and a restrained level of good-natured humour permeated the discussions.

At one point Hitchens emphasised his certainty that everything around us, including our intelligence, are the by-products of Accident and Chemistry; that life is ‘meaningless’. Wilson shook two tins of carbonated beverage, set them on the table, and remarked that the cans do not learn to speak to each other— they merely fizz. Chemistry cannot create Consciousness.

As to deciding the question of whether Christianity is or is not good for the world, neither Hitchens or Wilson, together or separately can hope to settle it for everyone. Unbelief and faith have rubbed along together for generations, as God intended they should. The Apostle Paul reminds us that not all men are endowed with the type of saving faith necessary for the cursed world which we inhabit ([2 Thessalonians 3: 2](#)). And evidence drawn from the Bible will not persuade those who do not accept its evidence as reality.

[fn1] Christopher is the brother of Peter, a journalist with the newspaper, *Daily Mail*, in the United Kingdom. He appears frequently on British television and radio. A Christian and social conservative, he rails against the decline in British moral values and culture. [\[back\]](#)

[fn2] By this remark, Hitchens most likely refers to the unscriptural doctrine of Hell-fire. [\[back\]](#)

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The Second Advent

The *objectives*, *manner*, and *signs* of the Second Advent are often misunderstood. We’ll look at these briefly.

1. Objectives: One of the most important is the gathering and delivering of His Bride, the Little Flock, the Church. But the main objective is to bless the entire human family (both the living and the dead) with the opportunity to gain *restitution*. This is alluded to in Acts 3: 20, 21, *King James Version (KJV)*: ‘And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.’ Restitution signifies a return to a previous state; for mankind this means an opportunity to revert to the original, unfallen condition that the human family occupied in the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 1: 26, 27, 31](#)). [\[See the Q&A on Restitution.\]](#)

2. Manner: The Bible uses both literal and figurative statements, and a failure to distinguish between the two has led to a misunderstanding of the evidences that mark the Second Advent. A classic verse on this point is Acts 1: 11 (*KJV*): ‘. . . Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.’ We infer from this that as Christ's departure was attended by relatively few – the faithful – and in secret, so will be His return. Mankind in general will not discern the evidences.

3. *Signs*: One of the signs also fixes the event in time, that is, a period of sustained strife, culminating in a worldwide unmanageable crisis, and expressed in Scripture in emphatic figures of speech (Luke 21: 25-27, *NIV*): ‘There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.’ During this period, Jesus indicates, will occur a singular increase in irreligiousness and consequent degrading of private and public morality. This is described in Matthew 24: 12 (*NIV*): ‘Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.’

Britain and Israel

Students of the Bible have long recognised the central place of the Jewish people in history and prophecy. In fact, their fate has for millennia been inextricably linked with the affairs of nations more powerful than they. As the chosen nation of God, Israel was humbled and lost its sovereignty at the Babylonian captivity. Although they were released by the Persian king, Cyrus, and permitted to re-establish Jerusalem as their civic and religious capital, the people never regained their autonomy, always under the thumb of Gentile powers up to the days of the Roman Empire, under which Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews scattered far and wide, setting up communities in the lands of strangers, cut off from their Promised Land.

By the middle of the nineteenth century events began to unfold which would culminate in the re-establishment of Israel as a nation-state in 1948. In his book, *Elpis Israel* (Hope of Israel), Dr. John Thomas, a Briton transplanted in the United States, and the founder of the Christadelphian movement, set out his expectations in 1850^[fn3]:

‘The pre-adventual colonization of Palestine will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish colonists will return in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the truth as it is in him. . . . Now any person acquainted with the present insecure condition of Palestine under the Ottoman dominion must be satisfied from the testimony, that some other power friendly to Israel must then have become paramount over the land, which is able to guarantee protection to them, and to put the surrounding tribes in fear. This is all that is needed, namely, security for life and property, and Palestine would be as eligible for Jewish emigration as the United States have proved for the Gentiles.

‘But to what part of the world shall we look for a power whose interests will make it willing, as it is able, to plant the ensign of civilization upon the mountains of Israel? . . . I know not whether the men, who at present contrive the foreign policy of Britain, entertain the idea of assuming the sovereignty of the Holy Land, and of promoting its colonization by the Jews; their present intentions, however, are of no importance one way or the other, because they will be compelled, by events soon to happen, to do what, under existing circumstances, heaven and earth combined could not move them to attempt. The present decisions of “statesmen” are destitute of stability. A shooting star in the political firmament is sufficient to disturb all the forces of their system; and to stultify all the theories of their political astronomy. The finger of God has indicated a course to be pursued by Britain which cannot be evaded, and which her counsellors will not only be willing, but eager, to adopt when the crisis comes upon them.

‘The decree has long since gone forth which calls upon the Lion of Tarshish to protect the Jews. Upwards of a thousand years before the British were a nation, the prophet addresses them as the power which at “*evening-tide*” should interest themselves in behalf of Israel. In view of this, “the time of the end,” he says, “The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind”; . . . This finished colonization Isaiah styles, “a present unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled”; for, speaking of “the time of the end,” he says, “In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled . . . to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion.” (Isaiah 18:7) But, then, the question returns upon us, by whom is the present to be made? The prophet answers this question in the first verse, saying, “Ho! to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Khush: that sendeth ambassadors by sea, and on vessels of papyrus upon the waters, Go ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from this and onward: a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers (invading armies (Isaiah 8:7)) have spoiled.” Now, the geography of this passage points to the Lion-power of Tarshish as “the land shadowing with wings.” Taking Judea, where the prediction was delivered, as the place of departure, the word “beyond” points to the east; that is, running a line from Judea across the Euphrates and Tigris, “the rivers of Khushistan,” it passes into Hindostan [India], where “the Merchants of Tarshish, and its young lions,” rule the land. [Note: The British rule [1848, *ed.*] the land “beyond the rivers of Kush,” or Ethiopia, in Africa, that is, Egypt, the Soudan, and the far South beyond the Atbara and the Blue and White Nile.]

‘But the British power is still further indicated by the insular position of its seat of government; for the “sending of fleet messengers by the sea,” implies that the shadowing power is an island-state. Ambassadors are sent from the residence of the Court, and if they proceed to their destination by sea, the throne of the power must be located in an island. The text, therefore, points to the north and east, to England and Hindostan, as the land shadowing Israel with its wings. To Britain, then, the prophet calls as the protector of the Jewish nation in the *evening-tide trouble*, and commands it to send its messengers in swift vessels because the crisis is urgent, and to plant Israel as “an ensign upon the mountains” (Isaiah 18:3); as it is written in another place, saying, “The Lord shall set an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isaiah 11:12).’

In broad outlines, Thomas was correct. In 1875, Prime Minister Disraeli purchased a major share in the Suez Canal for Great Britain, ensuring secure passage for its merchant ships to India, its ‘Jewel in the Crown’. Towards the end of the 1800s, the Zionist movement (political and religious) attracted Jewish immigrants from around the world into Palestine. The First World War and subsequent events, including the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, allowed Britain to solidify its position in the region and throughout much of the Middle East (incidentally setting the political and geographic boundaries which are points of extreme friction today, such as Iraq, Iran, Kuwait). The Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the eventual mandate granted by the League of Nations formalised Britain’s hegemony in the region, and set the stage for the eventual complications out of which Israel forged a nation in 1948.

Once her historic mission had been accomplished, Britain began to recede on the world stage, its role as Israel’s protector being assumed in the 1950s and ’60s by the United States, an alliance which will at some point come to an end, leaving Israel alone and vulnerable. At that juncture (we are not told when) events will converge to thrust Israel to the front and centre of the world stage as a prelude to the Kingdom of God on earth.

[fn3] Pages 441-443, *Elpis Israel: An Exposition of the Kingdom of God*, by John Thomas, M.D., Thirteenth Edition, 1942; orig. publication, 1850. [\[back\]](#)

Culled from the Web

A Righteous Gentile

A statue of Frank Foley, the MI6 agent who helped to save thousands of Jews from the Nazis in the 1930s, has been unveiled in the town of his birth.

[Source](#)

Telling the Truth Can Hurt

A temporary teacher loses her job for revealing to her 7-year-old students that Father Christmas does not exist.

[Source](#)

Peter Hitchens on the U.S. Election

Is Obama the man to save America?

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