

# THE BALFOUR DECLARATION: SCOTTISH PRESBYTERIAN ESCHATOLOGY AND BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS PALESTINE

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**ABSTRACT.** This article considers the theological influences on the Balfour Declaration which was made on the 2 November 1917 and for the first time gave British governmental support to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It explores the principal personalities and political workings behind the Declaration before going on to argue the statement cannot be entirely divested from the religious sympathies of those involved, especially Lord Balfour. Thereafter, the paper explores the rise of Christian Restorationism in the context of Scottish Presbyterianism, charting how the influence of Jonathan Edwards shaped the thought of Thomas Chalmers on the role of the Jews in salvation history which in turn influenced the premillennialism of Edward Irving and his Judeo-centric eschatology. The paper then considers the way this eschatology became the basis of John Darby's premillennial dispensationalism and how in an American context this theology began to shape the thinking of Christian evangelicals and through the work of William Blackstone provide the basis of popular and political support for Zionism. However, it also argues the political expressions of premillennial dispensationalism only occurred in America because the Chicago evangelist Dwight L. Moody was exposed to the evolving thinking of Scottish Presbyterians regarding Jewish restoration. This thinking had emerged from a Church of Scotland 'Mission of Inquiry' to Palestine in 1839 and been advanced by Alexander Keith, Horatius Bonar and David Brown. Finally, the paper explores how this Scottish Presbyterian heritage influenced the rise of Zionism and Balfour and his political judgements.

**KEYWORDS:** premillenianism, postmillennialism, Scottish, Presbyterianism, restorationism

## **Introduction**

In a letter consisting of three quite long sentences, Arthur James Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary changed the course of twentieth century history. Writing to Lord Rothschild, the effective leader of the Anglo-Jewish community on 2 November 1917, he informed him that the British Cabinet 'viewed with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people'. The statement went much further in promising that the British government would 'use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object'. This document was the single most important political

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development in the history of Zionism (or Jewish nationalism) from their lowly beginnings of the First Zionist Congress, held in a Casino in Basel, Switzerland in 1897 to the United Nations vote in 1948 formally establishing the state of Israel. In this short, typewritten letter, the most powerful and expansive empire known in human history committed itself to the Jewish people in a unique way. The Declaration itself was issued when Britain was on the brink of defeating the Ottoman Empire in war and thereby acquiring Palestine, in fact, at the very time, Allied troops under Sir Edmund Allenby were approaching Jerusalem, which eventually fell on 9 December 1917. In July 1922, the Council of the League of Nations enshrined the commitment made in the Balfour Declaration in its Palestine Mandate, which formally assigned Britain the governing of Palestine and acknowledged an explicit responsibility to enable the Jews to establish a national home in the country. Yet what motives were behind the British Empire putting its considerable weight behind the Zionist project?

Historians, as historians tend to do, have vigorously disagreed over the actual motivation for making the Declaration. Leonard Stein's 1961 work *The Balfour Declaration* argued the motives behind the Declaration were primarily related to strategic interests. Stein highlighted the advantages a Jewish homeland would give to British national security, ensuring its strategic control of the Middle East (Britain was already in possession of Egypt since 1882). Control of Palestine would secure the Suez Canal, and the prized trade routes to India and supplies of oil from the Persian Gulf (already essential, as the British Grand Fleet of Battleships had recently converted from coal to oil). Yet this explanation does not ultimately explain why it was that the British government issued the Balfour Declaration. Surely it was not necessary to make promises to the Jews to secure British strategic concerns in the Middle East? This very much went against the pattern of the 'New Imperialism' of the last quarter of the nineteenth century where parts of the world under the informal control of Britain were formally incorporated into the British Empire, without any form of guarantee to the local populations or appeals to international opinion of whatever shade. In more recent analysis there has again been a return to a consideration of the beliefs and ideological drivers of the principal politicians involved for as the Jewish intellectual Arthur Koestler has observed, in an often-repeated mantra, the declaration was 'one the most improbable political documents of all time', in which 'one nation solemnly promised to a second nation the country of a third' (cited by Kramer 2017).

Part of the problem in analysing the motivation for the Declaration is that it came, as it were, *ex cathedra* from on high. The coalition cabinet represented all the parties—save the Asquith Liberals—and had a much greater degree of autonomy than any peacetime cabinet. It operated enshrouded

in secrecy, gave no reasons for the Declaration, outlined no conditions—other than those in the Declaration itself—and expected no accountability. Lord Balfour and the Prime Minister David Lloyd George were the most powerful members of the British war cabinet; their support for the Declaration being crucial. Yet the Declaration was not debated in either of the Houses of Parliament and like most foreign policy issues, was never approved by the British legislature. Balfour merely minuted in Cabinet that ‘I have asked Ld Rothschild and Professor Weitzmann to submit a formula’ (Ingrams 1972: 8). Such a request was surprising given a lack of enthusiasm for Zionism characterised many of the British political classes. In January 1915 Sir Herbert Samuel, the first practicing Jew to serve in a British government, had circulated around the cabinet a memorandum on the subject of a Jewish state under British auspices. He noted ‘already a stirring among the twelve million scattered, and widespread sympathy with the idea of restoring the Hebrew people to their land’. The liberal Prime Minister at the time, Herbert Asquith, whose sympathy did not lie with the Jews treated the claim with incredulity. In a letter to his lady friend Venetia Stanley, he mocked the idea and notes the lack of enthusiasm for the proposal within the cabinet. He wrote could the scatted Jews,

in time, swarm back from all quarters of the globe (to Palestine) and in due course obtain Home Rule (what an attractive community!). Curiously enough the only other partisan for this proposal is Lloyd George [the Chancellor of the Exchequer], who I need not say, does not give a damn for the Jews, but thinks it will be an outrage to let the Holy Places pass into the hands of ‘agnostic and atheistic’ France (cited in Lewis 2009: 84-85).

Asquith was right that Lloyd George wanted the ‘Holy Places’ for Britain, but was wrong about his attitude towards the Jews.

In 1925 Lloyd George, the son of a Welsh Baptist schoolmaster, spoke to the Jewish Historical Society of England about his motives, how his Sunday school had inculcated in him a ‘natural sympathy’ toward the Jews and Zionism:

you must remember, we had been trained even more in Hebrew history than in the history of our own country... my schooling in Wales taught me far more about the history of the Jews than about the history of my own land. I could tell you all the kings of Israel. But I doubt whether I could have named half a dozen of the kings of England, and not more of the kings of Wales...

We used to recite great passages from the prophets and the Psalms. We were thoroughly imbued with the history of your race in the days of its greatest glory, when it founded that great literature which will echo to the last days of the old world, influencing, moulding, fashioning human character, inspiring and sustaining human motive, for not only Jews, but Gentiles as well. We absorbed it

and made it part of the best of the Gentile character (cited in Bar-Yosef 2005: 182).

This biblical influence was even more marked for Balfour, who had been raised in a strongly evangelical Scottish Presbyterian home. His mother, née Lady Blanche Gascoyne-Cecil, was the sister of Lord Salisbury, who served three times as British Prime Minister before being succeeded by his nephew, Arthur Balfour (the origin of the phrase 'Bob's your uncle!'). Although a wealthy Scottish aristocrat, Lady Blanche was an earnest evangelical who taught her children in daily Bible classes, instilling in her son a remarkable knowledge of the geography of Palestine and familiarizing him with the stories of the Old Testament. She was also known for her personal evangelistic efforts, undoubtedly scandalizing those of her own social rank and astounding those of humbler birth by distributing Gospel tracts at the railway station in East Linton near the sprawling Balfour family estate in East Lothian.

After the first world war Zionist historians like Albert Hyamson and Nahum Sokolow extolled this 'mixture of idealism, religious belief, and a desire to redress the past suffering of the Jewish people' amongst the British political elite as the principal driver behind the Declaration (Renton 2007: 85; see also Sokolow 1919 and Hyamson 1942). They maintained that after the Uganda Affair in 1903, in which a state (within the British Empire) was offered to the Jews in Uganda (well, actually in present day Kenya) by the then Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, the Zionist leadership recognized a genuine sympathy for, and benevolence towards, the Jews amongst certain British politicians. In the aftermath of the Affair it all made sense, that Britain, with her attachment to the idea of the Restoration of the Jews, and her record of toleration towards her own Jewish population should become the champion of Zion against the decrepit and illiberal Turks and the autocratic German Empire. After all the British missionary and diplomatic presence in Jerusalem had been the largest single factor in creating the conditions that made possible the growth of the Zionist cause. The Balfour Declaration was just another step on this existing trajectory.

Grounds for such a religious and ideological reading of the Declaration finds support in two ways. Firstly, there is the recognition that one of the anomalies of the Balfour Declaration was the lack of Jewish support for its existence. As late as 1914, there was only around 8,000 Zionists in a British Jewish community of over 300,000 (Stein 1961: 78). The vast majority of Jews were either Orthodox, and as such avowedly apolitical (or viewed Zionists as no more than impractical dreamers), or were Assimilationist, arguing that Judaism was not a nationality, but a religion. They believed that Zionism merely fostered anti-Semitism (not the other way around). Zionism meant Gentiles could argue Jews had a dual allegiance (or a split in their loyalty), a Jewish nationality and identity which could stand in opposition

and undermine their true or home nationality (such as British). This is why the strongest opposition in cabinet to the Declaration came from the only Jewish minister, Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India. He was a tormented Jew, banking heir and the cousin of Herbert Samuel. Together with Lord Curzon, the leader of the house of Lords and a Middle Eastern expert, Montagu argued vehemently that endorsing Zionism would only arouse more anti-Semitism and could prove disastrous for the region. Contrary to Balfour's wishes regarding the existence of a Jewish state, this opposition ensured the Declaration was left 'structurally ambivalent' and the last two clauses were added which naively declared 'nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country'.

The second consideration is the testimony of Dr Chaim Weizmann. In 1920 Weizmann became the leader of the World Zionist Congress and went on to be the first president of the newly formed state of Israel. He was one of the principal Jewish agitators behind the Balfour Declaration. In his autobiography in 1948-49 he records a concern that historians in casting the Declaration as 'a British imperial scheme' where losing sight of the ideological and religious convictions that brought it about. He noted 'England felt she had no business in Palestine except as part of the plan for the creation of the Jewish Homeland'. According to Weizmann, there was no pressing political or strategic advantage in the Declaration. It was made because statesmen like Balfour 'understood as a reality the concept of the Return. It appealed to their tradition and their faith' (cited by Merkley 1998: 50-51). This reiterates a point he made many years earlier while documenting the considerable Jewish opposition to the Declaration in Britain led by Lucien Wolf, a historian with long established contacts within the Foreign Office. He noted

Zionism was in (Wolf's) view a purely East European movement, with a certain following in the East End of London, and beneath the notice of respectable British Jews... It was never borne on him that men like Balfour, Churchill, Lloyd George, were deeply religious, and believed in the Bible, that to them the return of the Jewish people to Palestine was a reality, so that we Zionists represented to them a great tradition for which they had enormous respect (cited by Merkley 1998: 50).

Weizmann recognized that Christian Zionism or Restorationism—the belief that the Jewish people were destined by God to have a homeland in Palestine and Christians were obliged to use means to enable this to take place—existed as a well thought out, influential and coherent belief system long before any form of political Jewish nationalism had ever emerged in Eu-

rope. For him it was this religious heritage which caused the most powerful politicians of the age to throw their weight behind the Zionist cause in the face of the Jewish British establishment. The reason a few marginal Jewish immigrants fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe could win such backing from British and American politicians was due to the existence of Christian Restorationism. It was this tradition that allowed the Zionists to overcome significant Jewish opposition in both Britain and America and the general political reluctance to support a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration, according to Weizmann, was not only significantly influenced by, but was a consequence of, a Christian theological heritage. This claim appears even more plausible when one considers the actual make-up of the cabinet that endorsed the Declaration. Three of the nine-man cabinet, including Balfour, were Scottish Presbyterians while a fourth was an Ulster Scot with a Presbyterian background. The only Jew and English Anglican on the cabinet both opposed the statement, while six of the seven who approved it were evangelical Calvinists with a strong Restorationist bias, Scottish Presbyterianism being the strongest influence. Therefore, there is a strong case to be made that the Balfour Declaration can only be truly understood in terms of the Christian Restorationism which 'emerged out of the growing vernacular Bible culture in the seventeenth century, slumbered in the eighteenth and re-emerged with a vengeance in the nineteenth', especially in Scotland.

### **Romans 9-11**

The concept of a universal conversion of the Jews was popularised after the Protestant Reformation by the publication of the Geneva Bible in 1560. 'Prior to the Reformation', as Jewish historian Regina Sharif observes 'traditional Catholic thought had no place for the possibility of a Jewish return to Palestine nor any such concept as the existence of a Jewish nation' (1983:10). But this situation changed amongst English speaking Protestants largely due to the annotated notes that were to be found in the Geneva Bible. This Bible was the first mechanically printed, mass-produced Bible in English and had numbered verses with a commentary on the text. The commentary on the Pauline epistles had been lifted from an earlier Greek and Latin edition of the Bible produced by the Swiss theologian Theodore Beza, John Calvin's successor at Geneva. His notes on Romans 11:25 stated:

The blindness of the Jews is neither so universal that the Lord has no elect in that nation, neither will it be continual: for there will be a time in which they also (as the prophets have foretold) will effectually embrace that which they now so stubbornly for the most part reject and refuse (Geneva 1599).

These notes reflected a disagreement between Beza and Calvin over the interpretation of a series of enigmatic verses in Romans 11. These verses spoke of the salvation of Israel. Calvin followed Augustine and maintained Paul's declaration that 'all Israel will be saved' (Romans 11:26) was not a literal statement about Israel or the Jews. Rather it pointed to 'the Israel of God' (Galatians 6:16), 'those redeemed Jews and Gentiles who make up the body of Christ'. In his commentary on Romans, Calvin explains his view as follows:

Many understand this of the Jewish people, as though Paul had said, that religion would be restored among them as before: but I extend the word Israel to all the people of God, according to this meaning—'When all the Gentiles shall come in, the Jews also shall return from their defection to the obedience of faith; and thus shall be completed the salvation of the whole Israel of God, which must be gathered from both...' This interpretation seems to me the most suitable, because Paul intended here to set forth the completion of the kingdom of Christ, which is by no means to be confined to the Jews, but is to include the whole world. The same manner of speaking we find in Galatians vi. 16. The Israel of God is what he calls the Church, gathered alike from Jews and Gentiles (1849: 473).

Beza rejected this reading and insisted Paul's reference to 'Israel' was specifically to the Jews and not the entirety of God's people (Voorwinde 2003, 5-7). He believed there would be an 'ingathering' of Jews prior to the return of Christ and this sentiment was reflected in the Geneva Bible. As this Bible was the principal Bible of Elizabethan England and every household in Reformation Scotland was obligated by law to have a copy, Beza's reinterpretation of Romans 11 was soon widely adopted in the English-speaking world and was being developed through the eschatology of various Puritans and English dissenters. This was the Bible carried on the Mayflower to America and used by Oliver Cromwell and his soldiers during the English civil war. Under the influence of its teaching Cromwell welcomed Jews back into England, putting an end to the official ban against them that could be traced back to the time of Edward I in 1290. Therefore, by the end of the seventeenth century CE, due to the influence of the Geneva Bible on both sides of the Atlantic, in the English-speaking Protestant world it was generally accepted that the Jews were an integral part of God's future purposes in human history. As the Oxford academic and Puritan John Owen affirmed:

It is granted that there shall be a time and season, during the continuance of the kingdom of the Messiah in this world, wherein the generality of the nation of the Jews, all the world over, shall be called and effectually brought unto the knowledge of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ; with which mercy they shall al-

so receive deliverance from their captivity, restoration unto their own land, with a blessed, flourishing, and happy condition therein.

However, with the restoration of the British monarchy in 1660 this evolving consensus began to be challenged. A more conventional and conservative approach to the reading of Romans 9-11 was invited, particularly in England, by a Christian establishment that was keen to distance itself from the more revolutionary aspects associated with earlier millennial thinking and Protestant dissent. In 1691 Richard Baxter, the English Puritan leader of the non-conformists in the second half of the seventeenth century, published a book entitled, 'The glorious kingdom of Christ, described and clearly vindicated'. The book claimed the idea of a future earthly millennium and the restoration of the Jews was 'a fiction full of contradictions' and was 'dishonourable to Christ and his Kingdom'. (Baxter cited in Smolinski 2001: 146). Baxter pointed to the confused multiplicity of views that had sprung up in relation to the millennium as evidence 'against the bold asserers of a future calling and reign of the Jews'. Yet while through such critiques millennialism disappeared from the centre of theological reflection through most of the eighteenth century it continued in a dormant form in certain Calvinistic and Presbyterian circles. However, this Judeo-centric Puritan theology and eschatology was again brought back to the heart of evangelical consciousness in 1773 through the posthumous publication of Johnathan Edwards's *A History of the Work of Redemption* (Edwards 1816).

### **Postmillennialism and Scottish Presbyterians**

Edwards was a New England Congregationalist pastor and revivalist, who had been instrumental in a religious movement known as the Great Awakening. The Awakening represented a revitalization of Protestant religion in both Europe and North America. It rejected a traditional emphasis on ritual, ceremony, sacramentalism, and hierarchy in favour of cultivating a deeper sense of spiritual conviction and redemption within the individual which expressed itself in a commitment to a new standard of personal morality. As part of this movement Edwards emphasised the role of revival characterised by a deep personal sense of salvation. He also advocated a future restoration and in gathering of the Jews, although it was not until after his death that the full ramifications of this emphasis began to become apparent. Revisiting the thought of the Puritans regarding Romans 9-11 he maintained the Jews were central to salvation history and insisted

The Jews in all their dispersions shall cast away their old infidelity, and shall wonderfully have their hearts changed, and abhor themselves for their past unbelief and obstinacy; and shall flow together to the blessed Jesus, penitently, humbly, and joyfully owning him as their glorious king and only saviour, and



shall with all their hearts as with one heart and voice declare his praises unto other nations [Isaiah 66:20; Jeremiah 50:4]. Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews in the eleventh chapter of Romans (Edwards 1816: 386)

According to Edwards before Jesus returned a revival ‘would effectively sweep the world to such an extent that a largely Christianized, millennial world would result’ (Horner 2007: 334). The key to this revival would be the universal conversion of the Jews. As he explains:

Though we don’t know the time in which this conversion of the nation of Israel will come to pass, yet this much we may determine by Scripture, that it will [be] before [the] glory of the Gentile part of the church shall be fully accomplished, because it is said that their coming in shall be life from the dead to the Gentiles (Romans 11:12, 15) (Edwards 1816: 387).

Edwards insisted on the continued providential importance of the Jewish people, not only proposing the idea of a national salvation, but stressing that this salvation held the key to the salvation and blessing of the whole earth. This evangelical post-millennial vision (the word ‘post-millennial’ is derived from the idea that Jesus will return and set up his kingdom—which may or may not last for a thousand years—only AFTER a global revival) was an important influence on churches on both sides of the Atlantic, but it was in Presbyterian Scotland that it found its strongest adherents and most significant developments (Neele 2011).

Edward’s idea of a global revival precipitated by the salvation of the Jews very much resonated with the Puritan past of the Church of Scotland. Scottish Puritans like Thomas Boston (1676–1732) had engendered a respect and indebtedness in Scotland towards the Jews as they had underlined ‘All the means of grace, and acceptance through Jesus Christ, that we have now, we had originally from them... It was the light that came out from among them, that enlightened our dark part of the world’. In the wake of Edwards this prosemitic heritage was again revived at the beginning of the nineteenth century, resulting in a series of publications by Scottish Presbyterians like David Bogue’s *The Duty of the Christian to seek the salvation of the Jews* and Greville Ewing’s *Essays Addressed to Jews*. These works reflected the eschatology of Edward’s *History of Redemption* and encouraged a renewed appreciation of the role of the Jews in salvation history and a Judeo-centric world view amongst Scottish Calvinists. This Judeo-centric emphasis also influenced some of the emerging evangelicals within the Church of England like Charles Simeon. Simeon was the vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge from 1783–1836 and enjoyed very close relations with the Presbyterians of Scotland. Echoing many aspects of their Calvinistic evangelical ethos he was

an important influence on the Anglican church. In 1799 he became a founder-member of 'Africa and the East Mission' (which is now called the Church Missionary Society or CMS), a missionary agency established by the Church of England, and in 1809 he was instrumental, along with a number of Scottish Presbyterians, in establishing the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews (*LSJ*). (As Nancy Stevenson observes, Scots 'feature as pioneer preachers, as planners, as polemicists, as befrienders of the Jewish convert missionary Joseph Frey' who was to lead this society). The motivation for such societies was the belief that the evangelisation of the Jews held the key to the salvation of the entire earth. This conviction is vividly illustrated by a conversation between Simeon and Edward Bickersteth, a young Anglican vicar who was to displace Simeon as the most influential evangelical in the Church of England. Bickersteth, who was the deputy secretary of the CMS, was taken a back at a meeting of the *LSJ* when Simeon asserted

The conversion of the Jews was the most important objective in the world. Bickersteth handed Simeon a slip of paper with the following question: 'six million of Jews, and six hundred million of Gentiles—which is the most important?' Simeon wrote back: 'But if the conversion of the six, is to be life from the dead to the six hundred million—what then?' (cited by Lewis 2010: 62-63).

Bickersteth found himself convinced by this logic as were many Scottish Presbyterians. Foremost amongst these was one of Scotland's leading churchman, Thomas Chalmers (Noll 1997). Chalmers was instrumental in the formation of the Free Church of Scotland after the Church of Scotland schism known as the disruption in 1843 and has been called 'Scotland's greatest nineteenth-century churchman' (Cheyne 1993: 158). As an evangelical Chalmers believed in the importance of a defining conversion experience, but also saw his faith being worked out in social realities. Deeply influenced by Edwards' postmillennial vision he stressed the church must prioritise mission both at home and abroad. The Church of Scotland had to work for what he called the 'Christian good of Scotland' (Roxborough 1999). In view of this vision in 1815, when he became the minister of the Tron church in Glasgow, he sought to address urban poverty and deprivation with a programme of social reform which set the parish church at its centre. However, Chalmers' eschatology which was largely derived from Edwards also suggested God's redemptive purposes were inextricably linked to the fate of the Jews. According to Chalmers the conversion of the Jews would inaugurate not only an unprecedented spread of Christianity throughout the rest of the world, but a type of golden age prior to Christ's return. Therefore, he maintained the sharing of the gospel with the Jewish people was 'the first and foremost object of Christian policy' (Chalmers 1848: 436). Although he

does not necessarily conceive of this Judeo-centric emphasis working itself out in an overtly political form of Zionism, he nevertheless strongly affirmed the notion of the Christian obligation to support and defend the Jew and his interests. He taught his students

We should turn from the evil of our way towards them, and mourn over all the insults and the wrongs which for two thousand years have been heaped on this people of noble ancestry and of still nobler destination (Chalmers 1848: 436).

Chalmers believed through the evangelisation and supporting of the Jews Christians would find themselves on the right side of redemptive history. They would be acting in accordance with God's biblical prophetic blueprint in relation to salvation history.

### **The Mission of Inquiry**

The emphasis of Edwards and Chalmers meant in 19<sup>th</sup> century Scotland there was a growing number of Presbyterians who believed mission to the Jews was imperative because of the role they had in salvation history. Yet this emphasis was not dispensationalists and rejected the idea that the Jews would exist as a separate national entity at the end of time, independent of the church. Rather it believed the Jews would come to faith as a prelude to a global expansion of Christianity throughout the world. Given this belief in 1839 the decision was taken by the recently formed 'Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for the Conversion of the Jews' to send a 'Mission of Inquiry' to the Jews of Europe and the Near East. Four ministers were appointed (Alexander Keith, Alexander Black, Andrew Bonar and Robert Murray M'Cheyne) and sent on their way. The reason for the trip is given in the official report published in 1842 under the title 'Narrative of a mission of inquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839'. The delegation was tasked with seeking out Jewish communities throughout Europe and the Near East and ascertaining their readiness to accept Christ. Again, as the authors of the report detail 'we had only one object in view during the journey, to see the real condition and character of God's ancient people, and to observe whatever might contribute to interest others in their cause' (Bonar and M'Cheyne 1845: vi). This purpose did not necessarily involve a restorationist agenda and the immediate outcome of the mission was the creation in 1841 of an outreach to the Jews in Budapest and in the following year the founding in London of 'The Presbyterian British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews'. But as the report makes clear the focus of the trip had very much become Palestine.

These were some of the first Scots to set foot in the Holy Land in hundreds of years and they believed 'anything that may invest that land with

interest, will almost necessarily lead the reader to care for the peculiar people who once possessed it, and who still claim it as their own' (Bonar and M'Cheyne 1845: v). This talk of the Jewish 'cause' and their 'claim' on the land was part of a new and emerging evangelical Restorationism. Yet the claim was a Christian fiction. Most European Jews made no claim on Palestine and the vast majority were resistant to the idea of a return well into the twentieth century. The Great Sanhedrin of 1806 had unequivocally enunciated the position that the Jews were no longer a polity and had ceased to have any form of 'national' expression or identity. Nevertheless, drawing on biblical language and concepts Scottish Presbyterians and other evangelicals denoted the Jews as 'a Jewish nation' and 'a Jewish people'. Through this description, a new sense of 'national' Jewish identity was cultivated in the minds of evangelical Christians, although it did not reflect the actual socio-political realities. The authors of the report were assuming a Christian theological paradigm and imposing this on their narrative.

This situation becomes even more apparent in Alexander Keith's account of the journey published in 1843 and entitled *The Land of Israel According to the Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob*. In the account, Keith popularises the idea that the restoration of the Jews to Palestine will signal a new phase in salvation history, a phase in which the whole earth will be blessed. His thesis was simple. The Jews had been cursed by God as was evidenced by their wandering of the earth, but God would re-establish his covenant with them. This re-establishing would involve a return to the land. He cries 'Let that curse be taken away—let the Lord remember the people and remember the land, and there shall be no more scattering nor wandering, no more desolation, no more separation between Zion and her children' (Keith 1844: 43). Once the Jews had returned humanity would enter a period of unrivalled blessing, but for the earth to be blessed the Jews must return. Keith, therefore, encouraged Scottish Presbyterians to link the postmillennial vision of Edwards and Chalmers which affirmed a future revival amongst the Jewish people with a political restoration of the Jews to the land. Moreover, he insisted it was a Christian obligation to help facilitate this return.

To support this conviction Keith's account perpetrates a perception of the land as desolate. In his introduction, he cites a British Government report that suggests Palestinian could sustain a much greater population. Developing this theme Keith goes on to claim the Jews were 'a people without a country; even as their own land, as subsequently to be shown, is in a great measure a country without a people' (Keith 1844: 43). This sense of desolation is also present in Andrew Bonar's 1844 biography of M'Cheyne, *Memoir and remains of the Rev. Robert Murray M'Cheyne*. M'Cheyne died tragically at the age of twenty-nine just after the trip. His biography went on to be one

of the most widely read books in Scotland at the time with an entire chapter dedicated to his 'Mission to Palestine and the Jews'. This chapter reiterated many of Keith's themes regarding the desolation of Palestine and Jerusalem and suggested a yearning for the return of God's people to the land to which they are linked by the title of the chapter. The 'Mission of Inquiry', therefore, cultivated amongst Scottish Presbyterians the concepts and language which encouraged a sense of Jewish national identity, while creating the impression of a Jewish desire to return to what was a desolate land. These powerful perceptions and notions were built upon a series of false assumptions about the desolation of the land, the desire of the Jews to return and God's covenantal promises that saw the land as a Jewish birth right. In the Church of Scotland and the newly formed Free Church of 1843 such perceptions created a new focus on Palestine and saw the earlier stress on the role of the Jews in salvation history tied to a Restorationist agenda.

This new Restorationism, of which the Mission of Inquiry was very much at the centre, had come about because of the changing political situation in the near East. Ottoman power in the region was beginning to wane and in the 1831-34 Ottoman-Egyptian war, Egypt arrested control of the Palestinian territories from the Turks. In certain evangelical circles this decline of Ottoman power was cast in terms of the fulfilment of biblical prophecy and portrayed as indicative of an imminent return of the Jews to Palestine. The events were interpreted in terms of Daniel 11 where the king of the south defeats the king of the north prior to the coming of the Messiah. This reading of the situation had been embraced by various members of the *LSJ* and in 1835 Alexander McCaul who worked with the society published a book entitled *New Testament Evidence That the Jews Are to Be Restored to the Land of Israel*, this was then followed by an extensive *LSJ* tour of England, Scotland and Ireland by Bickersteth. In 1836 Bickersteth's lectures were published under the title *The Restoration of the Jews to their own land* in connection with their future conversion and the final blessedness of our earth'. The further revision of this work in 1841 provided a definitive statement on Jewish national restoration. In his lectures, Bickersteth took the postmillennial assumption of Edwards and Chalmers that the conversion of the Jews will lead to a global revival and universal blessing and linked this directly to the return of the Jews to Palestine. Breaking with the Puritan past, he argued 'the mass conversion of the Jews to Christianity would follow, rather than precede, their return' (Cited by Lewis 2010, 120). This allowed him to draw an important distinction between the Jews 'political return' and the 'glorious state which follows their conversion' (Lewis 2010, 122). The Mission of Inquiry popularised these ideas amongst British evangelicals and the Scottish Presbyterians.

Foremost amongst these evangelicals was the British parliamentarian Lord Shaftesbury. In 1835 he appointed Bickersteth as his personal chaplain and began to take an active interest in the prophetic interpretation of the events in the near East. Shaftesbury came to the conclusion that a Jewish return to Palestine would signal the age of conversion implied in Romans 11. In 1838 he persuaded Lord Palmerston, then Foreign Minister (and future Prime Minister) to establish a British consul in Jerusalem. He then followed this on the 4 November 1841, after the return of the Mission of Inquiry, with his now infamous advert in the *Colonial Times* newspaper calling on the heads of Europe to actively encourage a Jewish return. This call was simply an extension of the ideas he had developed in an article in the *London Quarterly Review* the previous year, where he had become the first major British politician to publicly advocate a resettlement of the Jews within Palestine. However, such a resettlement was resolutely resisted by the Jews of Europe. Nevertheless, Shaftesbury persisted and the influence of the Church of Scotland 'Mission of Inquiry' is very apparent when in July 1853 he wrote to the then British Prime Minister, Lord Aberdeen. Using the words of Keith in the letter, he insisted the Jews were 'the ancient and rightful lords of the soil' and the Holy Land is 'a country without a nation' in need of 'a nation without a country' (cited by Muir 2008: 57). Yet it was not until the Balfour Declaration that such sentiments were to constitute the official policy of the British government. Nevertheless, prior to this the Judeo-centric emphasis of the Scottish Presbyterians was to significantly influence American political and popular thinking by way of premillennial dispensationalism.

### **Edward Irving and the Rise of Premillennialism**

Chalmers's eschatology had a profound and lasting influence within Presbyterian Scotland through the many theological students and ministerial candidates he taught and trained, such as Andrew and Horatius Bonar and Robert Murray M'Cheyne. Yet his most enduring legacy came about through one of his former ministerial assistants, Edward Irving. Irving had worked with Chalmers in Glasgow for two years before in 1821 being appointed as the minister of a wealthy and prestigious Presbyterian church ('The National Scotch Church') in London. Recognised as a gifted orator, Irving saw his appointment as a chance to influence the political, legal and scientific classes who 'bear the world in hand' (Bennett 2014: 64). Yet he quickly rejected the optimistic postmillennial vision of Chalmers and the previous generation. In 1823 he announced he could no longer sustain

that error under which almost the whole of the church is lying, that the present world is to be converted unto the Lord, and so slide by natural

inclination into the church—the present reign of Satan hastening, of its own accord, into the millennial reign of Christ (Irving cited by Carter 2001: 156).

Irving maintained there was no glorious future awaiting the church as Europe turned its back on God and embraced apostasy. Rather the true church would be confronted with an increasingly hostile environment as scientific knowledge, academic scepticism and ecclesiastical accommodation increased. It had to separate itself from an establishment with ‘its vaunted moderation and prudence’ and become much more radical in its expression. This view came to be known as ‘premillennialist’ as it held Christ’s return would be prior to the millennium and its golden age. The second coming would occur as a ‘thief in the night and usher in a millennial period which would involve a dramatic discontinuity between this age and the age to come (Gilley 1993: 95-110).

However, despite cultivating this new premillennial perspective Irving upheld Chalmers emphasis on the Jews and continued to assert they were central to God’s redemptive purposes, but he proposed a radical reassessment of the idea. Irving concluded the Jews were not going to be converted and assimilated into the present church as Chalmers believed. Rather a messianic expression of Judaism would appear which would ultimately displace or replace the failing church. He insisted the Old Testament prophetic vision of the people of God required the end of the earthly witness of the Gentile church in its present form. Once God concluded his work in and through the church, possibly through a judgement upon the church, God would continue his work on earth through the Jews. They would be joined by the faithful remnant of Christians in a work of global evangelisation (Need 2002, Bennett 2014).

When the Lord shall have finished the taking of witness against the Gentiles... he will begin to prepare another ark of testimony... and to that end will turn his Holy Spirit unto his ancient people, the Jews, and bring them unto those days of refreshing... in this way the Lord will be preparing for himself an ark of testimony in the Jewish nation, through whom to make the whole world one great and universal ark of faithful testimony (Irving 1859: Lix).

The sign that this new ‘dispensation’ was about to occur involved both a deteriorating situation in the church and world and the restoration of the Jews to ‘the land of Israel’. This renewed national Israel was to be the foundation for a salvation history that was ‘both centring in and radiating out from the Jewish people’ (Irving 1859: Lx).

The basis of Irving’s eschatology was the assumption that ‘the hinge upon which the understanding of scripture turns’ is the existence of two sets of

promises, one to Israel and one to the church (cited by Henzel 2003: 91). Rejecting the traditional notion that the former had been suspended or subsumed in the later, he maintained the covenant with the Jews was still in force and equally valid. This assumption meant the Old Testament no longer represented a foreshadowing and type of that which was to find its fulfilment in Christ and the church but rather was a paradigm by which future events and realities were to be interpreted (Need 2002: 81-91). As Hugh McNeile, the chair of the Society for the Investigation of Prophecy that Irving helped found, observed in a lecture on the Jews and the Old Testament in 1827 ‘Of the portions of passages which apply to the nation and the land, be thus admitted to the favour of a literal interpretation’ (cited in Spence 2015: 117). Things in scripture that had once been thought to have been in the past or fulfilled in Christ or even perceived in terms of a heavenly, spiritual reality were now rendered as belonging to a temporal, earthly political sphere. ‘The ‘earthiness’ of Old Testament prophecy was not just a metaphor for a spiritual salvation, but a real, temporal-spatial event that was perhaps beginning right in front of people’s eyes’ (Spence 2015: 118). There was to be a literal future restoration of Israel. Such a Judeo-centric emphasis was very different from that found in Chalmers and the work of *LJS*. Chalmers believed in the evangelisation of the Jews, insisting that their acceptance of Christ and admission within the church would be the catalyst for global revival. He did not adhere to the notion of two equally valid and parallel covenants, one with the Jews and the other with the Gentiles. Nevertheless, outside of Scotland Irving’s thought proved highly influential, especially after it was adopted and developed by a former Church of Ireland Anglican curate called John Nelson Darby who came to lead the Plymouth Brethren.

### **Darby, Brookes, Moody, and Blackstone**

Darby took Irving’s ideas and created a comprehensive theological system that is known as ‘Premillennial Dispensationalism’. In this system, the story of God’s ancient people becomes paramount, told in seven acts or stages of redemptive history, the church appearing as a subsidiary theme or parenthesis. As the theologian Martin Spence explains,

Darby argued that God had dealt with Israel in six dispensations, or eras, each of which represented a kind of test that God’s people had failed. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel had hoped for the coming of a Messiah to bring about a promised earthly inheritance, but had, in the end, rejected Christ. This rejection was, in fact, the termination of the sixth Jewish dispensation. Because of this rejection, God had put his dealings with Israel on hold, paused Jewish history, and thrown open the offer of salvation to the Gentiles (2015: 120).



Yet this situation was only temporary. Once God's dealing with the Gentiles were completed, he would again return to his original purpose with the Jews, but this time they would embrace the Messiah. This embrace would usher in the seventh Jewish dispensation and that of the millennium. However, prior to this happening the church would be removed from earth to heaven in what was called 'the rapture' (Ice 2016). This event would take the Christian community out of the world, so God's purposes could again continue on earth through the Jews.

This dispensational theology was based on what Darby called a 'literal' interpretation of scripture. By literal he meant 'an interpretation of the Old Testament which avoided the common tendency to see the promise to Israel as fulfilled in the church'. This interpretation reflected the implicit hermeneutical dualism of Irving and his prophetic school which stressed the distinction between the two covenants of the Old and New Testaments. Old Testament prophecies were pertinent to the things of the earth and the future, while the New Testament spoke of a 'spiritual' ethereal realm and invited a symbolic and analogical reading. As Darby explains:

In prophecy, when the Jewish church or nation is concerned, i.e., when the address is directly to the Jews, there we may look for a plain and direct testimony, because earthly things were the Jews' proper portion. And on the contrary, where the address is to the Gentiles... there we may look for symbol, because earthly things were not their portion and the system of revelation to them must be symbolical... When therefore facts are addressed to the Jewish church as a subsisting body... I look for a plain, common-sense, literal statement... On the other hand, as the church was a system of grace and heavenly hopes... it is symbolized by analogous agencies (cited in Spence 2015: 119).

The Bible promised a heavenly inheritance to the Christians and an earthly kingdom to the Jews. This hermeneutic encouraged a premillennial 'other worldliness' in terms of faith which allowed the Christian to withdraw from the supposed political and religious corruption and awfulness of the age. At the same time, it supported a socio-political engagement on behalf of the Jews and the facilitation of a Jewish nationalism (Henzel 2003). Through this dynamic various evangelical Christian groups in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who would otherwise be apolitical became some of the greatest advocates of Jewish nationalism and Restorationism, especially in the United States of America (see Kiracofe 2009).

Just after the American civil war, in 1864 Darby met James H. Brookes, the pastor of Walnut Street Presbyterian Church, St. Louis. In the wake of the war Brookes readily embraced a premillennial outlook and went on to popularise Darby's Judeo-centric dispensationalism throughout America and its various denominations. He was responsible for numerous publica-

tions like *Israel and the Church* and what came to be known as the Niagara Bible Conference. This conference was an extremely popular and influential interdenominational gathering which ran from 1875 to his death in 1897. (He also was the one who mentored Cyrus Scofield, a lawyer and congregational minister who in 1909 was responsible for the publication of the premillennial dispensational Scofield Reference Bible). Yet Brookes and most American premillennial dispensationalists were not initially Zionists. They believed the restoration of the Jews to Israel would occur only after the return of Christ. For instance, the fourteen-point statement known as the 'Niagara creed' which was issued in 1878 states:

We believe that the world will not be converted during the present dispensation, but is fast ripening for judgment, while there will be a fearful apostasy in the professing Christian body; and hence that the Lord Jesus will come in person to introduce the millennial age, when Israel shall be restored to their own land.

The return of Christ was to precede the restoration of the Jews to the land and the millennium. However, this idea was again shaped and revised through an encounter with the eschatology of the Scottish Presbyterians.

In 1872-3 the Chicago evangelist Dwight L Moody, who was an important member of the Niagara faculty made the first of three visits to Scotland. The principal mover who brought Moody to Scotland, and hosted him while here, was Horatius Bonar. Bonar was a highly respected Free Church of Scotland minister and the older brother of Andrew Bonar who was part of the Mission of Inquiry. He strongly held to a Judeo-centric view of salvation history that had first been taught to him by Chalmers and now characterised most nineteenth century Scottish Presbyterianism. In 1847 he had published a book entitled *Prophetical Landmarks* which went to more than five editions and made a compelling case for reading the Old Testament prophecies about Israel's restoration as a future reality (1847: 273-342). Yet like Irving he had rejected Chalmers's postmillennialism. Nevertheless, in 1861 he revised some of his thinking as David Brown, the Principal of the Free Church College in Aberdeen, caused an ecclesiastical national debate with his book *The Restoration of the Jews*. In the book, Brown argued for a postmillennial future brought about by the restoration of the Jews to Palestine. In the wake of the debate, although not abandoning every aspect of his premillennialism, Bonar accepted the premise the Jews would be restored before Christ's return. In an article entitled the Jew, first published in the July 1870 edition of *The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*, he gave a definitive expression to this conviction. He asserted:

I believe in Israel's restoration to their land and their conversion to their Messiah. I accept as a future certainty that the Jewish people will be gathered to their

ancient homeland and that ultimately 'all Israel shall be saved' (Romans 11:26). As I believe in Israel's present disgrace, so I believe in the nation's coming glory and pre-eminence. I believe that God's purpose regarding our world can only be understood when we understand God's purpose for Israel. I believe that all human calculations as to the earth's future—political or scientific, philosophical or religious—must fail if they do not take into account God's great purpose regarding the standing of Israel at the Last Day. I believe it is impossible to enter into God's mind regarding the destiny of mankind, without taking as our key or our guide His mind regarding that ancient nation whose history, so far from being ended, or nearly ended, is only about to begin... If He has set Israel as the great nation of the future, who are we to set aside God's arrangements? (Bonar 1870: 411)

This article not only assumes that the Jews will be restored to Palestine prior to the coming of Christ, but also links this restoration to the postmillennial hope of universal Jewish conversion (this is despite Bonar being a professing premillennialist). It epitomised the thinking of most Scottish Presbyterians, with its emphasis on the Christian need to facilitate the return of the Jews to Palestine to secure global revival and blessing. Through his contact with Bonar, Moody also came to share this conviction and conveyed it to others within the Niagara movement. The most significant of these was a Chicago businessman and evangelist, who was a friend of Moody, William Eugene Blackstone.

In 1878 Blackstone published one of the most widely read and influential books of the time on the subject of eschatology entitled *Jesus is Coming* (Moorhead 2008). Running to over 840,000 copies the book insisted the restoration of Israel is 'an incontrovertible fact of prophecy' and 'intimately connected with our Lord's appearing'. This claim was rooted in a reiteration of the premillennial thinking of Irving which first advocated the two separate trajectories of Israel and the church, but went beyond Irving in advocating this return prior to Christ's coming. On the 24–25 November 1890 Blackstone chaired a Jewish-Christian dialogue and conference in Chicago which considered the persecution and displacement of eastern European Jews in Russia. The event was called 'The Conference on the Past, Present and Future of Israel' and participants unanimously passed 'resolutions of sympathy with the oppressed Jews of Russia' which read,

The President of the United States is to be petitioned to confer with the Queen of England, the Emperor of Germany, the Sultan of Turkey, the President of the French Republic, and many other rulers of Europe, on the propriety of calling an International Conference to consider the condition of the Jews in modern nations and the possibility of opening a way for their restoration to Palestine (cited in Moorhead 2010: 789).

Copies of the resolution were sent to the 'Czar and other potentates' as an action of solidarity. Nevertheless, Blackstone was dissatisfied with this resolution alone and began a petition endorsed by some of the most significant public figures and organizations in America to call on the President and government of the U.S.A. to bring political and international pressure to bear to allow the Jews to return to 'their ancient homeland, where they would be at peace'.

The petition was entitled 'Palestine for the Jews', but came to be known as 'The Blackstone Memorial'. It was submitted to the Secretary of State James G. Blaine in February 1891. The document read,

What shall be done for the Russian Jews? It is both unwise and useless to undertake to dictate to Russia concerning her internal affairs. The Jews have lived as foreigners in her dominions for centuries, and she fully believes that they are a burden upon her resources and prejudicial to the welfare of her peasant population, and will not allow them to remain. She is determined that they must go. Hence, like the Sephardim of Spain, these Ashkenazim must emigrate. But where shall 2,000,000 of such poor people go? Europe is crowded and has no room for more peasant population. Shall they come to America? This will be a tremendous expense, and require years. Why not give Palestine back to them again? According to God's distribution of nations it is their home; an inalienable possession from which they were expelled by force... Why shall not the powers, which, under the treaty of Berlin in 1878, gave Bulgaria to Bulgarians and Serbia to the Servians now give Palestine back to the Jews? (cited in Moorhead 2010: 791).

The petition secured Blackstone an audience with President Benjamin Harrison on 5 March 1891 where he emphasised the religious significance of the events in Europe. The President was being given 'a privileged opportunity to further the purposes of God concerning His ancient people' and the opportunity to place America at the centre of biblical history, making them a key player in end-time events (Moorhead 2010: 792-93). Blackstone's intervention and the rise of premillennial dispensationalism in American church life ensured that six years before the journalist Theodore Herzl published his pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* (1896) in Europe advocating the restoration of the Jewish state or convened the First Zionist Congress in Switzerland (1897) to address the Russian crisis there was in the U.S.A. wide spread support for Zionism. In a letter to the American President Woodrow Wilson in 1916 Blackstone could claim there was a 'general approval' for the idea of a Jewish return to Palestine 'from our entire population'. Although probably an exaggeration it does reflect the national influence of premillennial dispensationalism and its advocates in American life and politics.

Louis Brandeis, the Jewish Supreme Court Justice who led the Zionist movement in America at the time of the Balfour Declaration, recognised the support of Christian premillennialists for Zionism was critical to his cause. In 1916 he dubbed Blackstone ‘The Father of Zionism’ and convinced him to gather Christian support throughout America and resubmit his former petition for a Jewish homeland in Palestine to the then President Woodrow Wilson. With less than 15,000 American Jews supporting Zionism in 1914 Brandeis knew without Christian endorsement the project would fail. Wilson who was the son of a Presbyterian minister was deeply impressed by Blackstone’s case and resonated with his faith based arguments. As Wilson himself later marvelled, ‘To think that I, the son of the manse should be able to help restore the Holy Land to its people’. Without Wilson’s assent, it is unlikely that the British Cabinet would have approved the Balfour Declaration. This American support for Zionism was crucial to the Declaration and one of its most formative influences (see Kramer 2017). Yet it was not only in America that evangelical Presbyterian eschatology shaped political inclinations.

### **Balfour and Christian Restorationism**

Balfour was raised in an evangelical Scottish Presbyterian household where men like Chalmers and M’Cheyne were revered and esteemed as examples of faith. Although Balfour was careful to use the vocabulary of modern statesmanship, he was driven by a deep religious consciousness (2000: 41). When in 1917 in a meeting with the American Zionist leader Brandies, Balfour is reported as saying ‘I am a Zionist’ he was affirming more than the persuasiveness of the arguments of Brandies (Brandies 1975: 289). He was acknowledging his Scottish Presbyterian heritage and recognising the debt Zionism owed to a Christian and biblical frame of reference. He was indicating the way his religious heritage and convictions were influencing his perception of socio-political and international concerns. These convictions were derived from his Scottish Calvinistic heritage and reflected a sense of indebtedness to the Jews. Ever since the ‘Mission of Inquiry’ the Calvinistic post and premillennial hope of men like Chalmers and Irving was in the public and ecclesiastical imagination of Scotland increasingly focused on the return of the Jews to Palestine. Men like Horatius Bonar, who was a prolific hymn writer, popularised the notion of this return with such hymns as *Everlasting Remembrance*, *Tidings for Israel*, and *Israel’s Return*, while his brother Andrew through his biography of Murray M’Cheyne had conveyed the relationship of the Jews to Palestine into the country’s national consciousness. By the middle of the 19th century in Scotland it was generally assumed to be a Christian duty and obligation to support the Jew wherever possible. Their return to Palestine was believed to be part of God’s

purpose and intent to do good to all humanity. Therefore, for Balfour establishing the Jewish people in the land to which they had such strong historical and religious ties was the right and moral thing to do, particularly against the background of centuries of persecution. As he explains to Lord Curzon in a private memorandum on the 11 August 1919:

in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country... The Four Great Powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land... (Cited in Ingram 1972: 73).

Balfour was convinced the right to self-determination by the Palestinians needed to be sacrificed in the interests of the greater good. He implies a providential and moral agenda that must take precedence over the indigenous population, a thought that may well have been derived from his religious heritage. This heritage probably explains why Balfour so single-mindedly choose to disregard the interests of the indigenous population of Palestine.

Therefore, with no obvious compelling political, military or economic reason for the Declaration it would seem naïve to disregard the coincidence between religious and theological aspirations and Balfour's statement. The Declaration with its support for the return of Jews to Palestine realises a goal which evangelical Christians on both sides of the Atlantic adhered to long before the rise of Zionism as a political ideal. As Chaim Weizmann insisted in his 1948-49 autobiography there was no pressing political or strategic advantage in the Declaration. It was made because statesmen like Balfour 'understood as a reality the concept of the Return. It appealed to their tradition and their faith'. The interaction of this Christian conviction and the Zionist cause is vividly illustrated by the dispensationalists Blackstone's reaction to the 1903 offer by the British government of an interim Jewish state in Uganda. He immediately wrote to Herzl warning against it and reminding him of a Bible he had sent previously in 1897 outlined with the specific biblical references to Jewish restoration to Palestine alone. The Bible is said to have been prominently displayed on Herzl's desk for many years thereafter (Moorhead 2010: 795). This type of interaction between the Zionist cause and the theology of the American Dispensationalists and the Scottish Presbyterian Restorationists needs to be acknowledged and recognised as part of the story of the Declaration and Zionism itself. The recognition of the role of the Jews in salvation history that was advanced by Edwards and Chalmers, found expression in the dispensationalism of Darby and Blackstone, as well as the evangelical sensibilities and Restorationism of

the Scottish Presbyterians cannot be divorced from its legacy in both British and American foreign policy.

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