



The Church and Israel: In Search of a New Model in Post-Holocaust Theology

Dr. Istvan Tatai Ph.D.

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The Church and Israel: In Search of a New Model in Post-Holocaust Theology Dr. Istvan Tatai Ph.D. Why do most Christians and their Churches not understand what their attitude should be with regard to modern Israel? Admittedly this book is primarily written for theologians. However, any serious Bible student will find the answers to this puzzling question in Dr. Istvan Tatai's doctoral dissertation which is far more than just an academic exercise as it will lead to repentance and reconciliation, to restoration and 'life from the dead.' Read More: Two significant earthquakes have shaken Post-World War II theological thought. One is the issue of the doctrinal responsibility of the Church in triggering the Holocaust. The other is the problem of the re-established Jewish state. The Church, which traditionally called itself "the true Israel", had to face the fact that the Jewish people had survived, and the possibility that God had not cast off Israel after all but was still faithful to the ancient promises and covenant He had given to Abraham. 1) What is the ecclesiological identity and place of the Church in the New Testament; 2) what role is Israel playing after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ in salvation history; 3) and how can we describe the Biblical relationship of both in a balanced way that does not avoid the logical tension of predestination and free will? In the Hungarian author's book the most important Post-Holocaust statements – dealing with the relationship between the Church and Israel – are presented and analyzed. Nearly all of the studied church documents – from diverse historical and theological backgrounds – agree on two things: a) During the Nazi regime, the churches did not rise to the height of their calling, but subsequently shouldered responsibility for what had happened and repented. b) It is necessary to revise our theological view concerning the Jewish people. The documents declare that Israel has a valid covenant with their God, not rescinded by God even after Jesus' death on the cross. The book presents the most modern ecclesiological models as well as the earlier ones that are still current, such as the officially repudiated "replacement model", the classical covenant-oriented and federal theological approaches along with Karl Barth's Israel doctrine or the so called two-ways theologies. Dr. Tatai's conclusion is that, compared to early Christian thought, both the earlier and the latest models have led to a certain impoverishment. The negative fruit of the earlier models was primarily of an ecclesiological and eschatological nature: the Church forgot its roots mentioned in Rom 11, the Jewish olive tree; and it did not know what to do with a wider eschatological perspective. But the deficiencies of the newer models are also conspicuous and, in fact, these may be more tragic than those of earlier theories. In these formulae the Church seems to be willing to renounce fundamental Christological-soteriological doctrines, including the denial of Jesus' Messiahship that involves uncertainty regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. Among diverging theological models, the author presents two special voices as well: Palestinian Liberation Theology and Messianic Judaism. It is recognized that the conflict in the Middle East is primarily a theological problem and the declarations of Christian theology unwittingly sound like a political standpoint. The New Testament speaks of the relationship between the Jewish people and the Church in a unique and profound way, nevertheless through apparent "controversies". Hence, Dr. Tatai thinks that it is hard to place New Testament statements concerning the theological existence of the Jewish people in a single uncontroversial system. He sets up a new and unique model that is basically Calvinistic in that it thinks in terms of a God who predestines and of the Abrahamic covenant, yet it also finds a specific place for the new covenant embraced by the single covenant of Israel. This is called Israel's paradoxical existence – The Olive tree model.

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