

**SIR HENRY FINCH: EARLY CHRISTIAN ZIONIST**  
*Tom's Perspectives*  
by Thomas Ice

Forerunners to some of our prophecy beliefs today can be found in a group of British Protestants in the early 1600's. Specifically we look to the Puritans as our prophetic forefathers, especially in relation to our beliefs about the future of Israel. These spokesmen began pursuing the questions of what does God have in store for national Israel, the Jewish people as a nation? One such person was Sir Henry Finch (1558-1625) who wrote a seminal book on the topic. His life underwent a dramatic change after the release of his book about Israel.

**BACKGROUND**

The path that led to the widespread belief in the end-time restoration of the Jews to Israel started with the study of the Bible, first in the original languages, followed by the influence of the newly acquired English translations.<sup>i</sup> When both scholars and laymen alike, for the first time in the history of the church, had the text of Scripture (both Old and New Testaments) more readily available, it led to greater study, a more literal interpretation and a greater awareness of the Israel of the Old Testament. This provided the atmosphere in which a major shift occurred in England (also on the Continent to a lesser degree) from medieval Jew-hatred, which led to the expulsion of all Jews from Britain in 1290, to their invitation under Cromwell to return in 1655. "From such a context and from among this people," notes Douglas Culver, "now growing more and more intimate with things Jewish, the early millenarian protagonists for the restoration of the Jews to their Palestinian homeland arose."<sup>ii</sup> However, it would be a tough road to get to the point where belief in a Jewish restoration to their ancient homeland would become so widespread.

It wasn't just any group of English Protestants that provided a fertile soil for Jewish Restorationist doctrine it was out of the English Puritan movement that this belief sprung. "Starting with the Puritan ascendancy," notes Tuchman, "the movement among the English for the return of the Jews to Palestine began."<sup>iii</sup> Why the Puritan? Puritans were not just dissenters, they were a Protestant sect that valued the Old Testament to an unprecedented degree in their day. Tuchman tells us:

They began to feel for the Old Testament a preference that showed itself in all their sentiments and habits. They paid a respect to the Hebrew language that they refused to the language of their Gospels and of the epistles of Paul. They baptized their children by the names not of Christian saints but of Hebrew patriarchs and warriors. They turned the weekly festival by which the church had from primitive times commemorated the resurrection of her Lord, into the Jewish Sabbath. They sought for precedents to guide their ordinary conduct in the books of Judges and Kings.<sup>iv</sup>

Thus, we see "by the turn of the seventeenth century, some exegetes began to accept first the eventual conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity and then even their Restoration to the land of Israel. Emblematic of this new hermeneutic is Sir Henry Finch's 1621 work . . . in which he argued against allegorical interpretations of Israel and linked the return and calling of the Jews with the salvation of Gentiles."<sup>v</sup>

### SIR HENRY FINCH

A key proponent for Israel's future restoration was Sir Henry Finch who wrote a seminal work on the subject in 1621, called *The World's Resurrection or The Calling of the Jewes. A Present to Judah and the Children of Israel that Ioyned with Him, and to Ioseph (that valiant tribe of Ephraim) and all the House of Israel that Ioyned with Him.*<sup>vi</sup>

Finch was born in England in 1558 to Sir Thomas Finch who had attained the rank of Knight in the Army.<sup>vii</sup> Sir Henry was educated at Oxford University, admitted to the Bar at Grey's Inn at the young age of 25. He was elected to Parliament in 1593 at the age of 35.<sup>viii</sup> The king often sought out legal advice from Finch. "Francis Bacon retained Finch for the exacting, labor of codifying the 'concurrent statutes heaped one upon the other into one clear uniform law.'"<sup>ix</sup> Finch was the greatest legal mind in England at that time. Finch was also an excellent theologian and student of the Bible.

Before writing his well-known work on the future of Israel, Finch has also contributed two published works in the field of theology. The first was *The Sacred Doctrine of Divinitie, Gathered out of the Word of God, Together with an Explication of the Lordes Prayer,*<sup>x</sup> while the other work was a commentary on the Song of Solomon.<sup>xi</sup> Culver tells us, "The same cultivation of logical consistency that marked *Finch's Law* was equally employed in the interest of Bible study."<sup>xii</sup>

### FINCH'S RESTORATION VIEWS

In essence, Finch's tightly argued book of 247 pages argues that there will be a national conversion and regathering of the Jews in the last days. Jewish faith will pave the way for a great time of Gentile blessings throughout the world, but through the Jewish return to their Lord and Savior, Jesus of Nazareth. Finch systematizes the biblical teaching of a time of future blessing to Israel as Israel, although he believed that Israel would still be a part of the present Christian Church. Finch did not make a sharp distinction between Israel and the church, as J. N. Darby would do about 200 years later. However, he did see a literal fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to Israel during this present age. Finch taught that the biblical "passages which speak of a return of these people to their own land, their conquest of enemies and their rule of the nations are to be taken literally, not allegorically as of the Church."<sup>xiii</sup> Finch says the following:

Where *Israel, Iudah, Tscon, Ierusalem*, etc. are named in this argument, the Holy Ghost meaneth not the spiritual Israel, or Church of God collected of the Gentiles, no, nor of the Iewes and Gentiles both (for each of these have their promises severally and apart), but Israel properly descended out of Iacobs loynes<sup>xiv</sup>.

The core of Finch's book is laid out in a series of "46 propositions, each developed by turn, he demonstrates a comprehension of the subject that is surprising."<sup>xv</sup> Finch not only taught a restoration of Israel to their land, he took many of the details of a Jewish millennium literally. A regathered Israel "shall inhabite all the parts of the land" and "shall continue in it for euer."<sup>xvi</sup> Finch also taught, that all twelve tribes will be united and "all nations shall honour them."<sup>xvii</sup>

### THE REACTION TO FINCH'S BOOK

"Finch's argument may be considered the first genuine plan for Restoration."<sup>xviii</sup> "The book had been published for a matter only of weeks when the roof caved in on the

author's head," notes Culver. "In the persecution which ensued, Finch lost his reputation, his possessions, his health—all precipitated by his belief in Jewish national restoration."<sup>xix</sup> King James of England was offended by Finch's statement that all nations would become subservient to national Israel at the time of her restoration.<sup>xx</sup> Finch and his publisher (William Gouge of Cambridge University) were quickly arrested when his book was released by the High Commissioner (a creation of King James), and examined.<sup>xxi</sup> "Both men lost everything. Houses and possessions were confiscated. Reputations were destroyed. Separation from former friends, associates and family was enforced by threat and fear. Licenses to practice their professions were lifted and physical incarceration broke their health."<sup>xxii</sup> Finch died a few years later in prison (1625).

"The doctrine of the restoration of the Jews continued to be expounded in England, evolving according to the insight of each exponent, and finally playing a role in Christian Zionistic activities in the latter part of the nineteenth and in the first of the twentieth centuries."<sup>xxiii</sup> It was men like Finch who began to lay the groundwork needed within Protestantism that would later result in the modern reestablishment of the nation of Israel. Maranatha!

## ENDNOTES

---

<sup>i</sup> See Douglas J. Culver, *Albion and Ariel: British Puritanism and the Birth of Political Zionism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), pp. 51–70.

<sup>ii</sup> Culver, *Albion and Ariel*, p. 60.

<sup>iii</sup> Barbara W. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York: Ballantine Press, 1956), p. 122.

<sup>iv</sup> Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*, p. 125.

<sup>v</sup> Stephen Snobelen, "'The Mystery of This Restoration of All Things': Isaac Newton on the Return of the Jews," in James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin, editors, *The Millenarian Turn: Millenarian Contexts of Science, Politics, and Everyday Anglo-American Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), p. 96.

<sup>vi</sup> Culver, *Albion and Ariel*, p. 101.

<sup>vii</sup> Douglas Joel Culver, "The Contribution of Sir Henry Finch (1558–1625) To British Nonconformist Eschatology: A Study in the Organic Character and Significance of the Doctrine of National Jewish Restoration to Palestine in the Historical Context of Time" (ThM thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1973), p. 43.

<sup>viii</sup> Culver, "Contribution of Sir Henry Finch," p. 43.

<sup>ix</sup> Culver, "Contribution of Sir Henry Finch," p. 43.

<sup>x</sup> Culver, "Contribution of Sir Henry Finch," p. 46.

<sup>xi</sup> Culver, "Contribution of Sir Henry Finch," p. 47.

<sup>xii</sup> Culver, "Contribution of Sir Henry Finch," p. 45.

<sup>xiii</sup> Peter Toon, "The Latter-Day Glory," in Toon, editor, *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1970), p. 32.

<sup>xiv</sup> Finch, *The Worlds Great Restauration* etc., p. 6. Cited in Culver, "Contribution of Sir Henry Finch," p. 53.

<sup>xv</sup> All 46 propositions are quoted by Culver, "Contribution of Sir Henry Finch," pp. 54–58.

<sup>xvi</sup> Cited in Culver, "Contribution of Sir Henry Finch," p. 56.

<sup>xvii</sup> Cited in Culver, "Contribution of Sir Henry Finch," p. 57.

<sup>xviii</sup> Lawrence J. Epstein, *Zion's Call: Christian Contributions to the Origins and Development of Israel* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), p. 8.

<sup>xix</sup> Culver, *Albion and Ariel*, p. 101.

<sup>xx</sup> Culver, *Albion and Ariel*, pp. 102–03.

<sup>xxi</sup> Culver, *Albion and Ariel*, pp. 116–17.

<sup>xxii</sup> Culver, "Contribution of Sir Henry Finch," p. 67.

---

<sup>xxiii</sup> Carl F. Ehle, Jr., "Prolegomena to Christian Zionism in America: The Views of Increase Mather and William E. Blackstone Concerning the Doctrine of the Restoration of Israel," Ph.D. Dissertation at New York University, 1977, p. 61.