

## A SURREJOINDER TO DAVID RAUSCH'S REJOINDER

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Though I never considered David Rausch's original article to be a personal attack, after reading his rejoinder I am beginning to get a little suspicious. Rausch initially criticized a few pages' worth of my views on the relationship between Jews and premillennialists. Now he takes issue with my whole book.

It is safe to say that Rausch does not care for my *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*. He calls it shoddy, shallow, simplistic, inaccurate, insensitive, imprecise and pejorative. He thinks my main thesis is a psychological fantasy, states that I portray premillennialists as ethereal, slinking robots (an interesting image, to say the least), and claims to have located the thousands of pages I did not read while I did my research. He does not even like the book's title and assures us that Arno C. Gaebelin (who died in 1945) would not have liked it either. If Rausch is right about all this, somebody ought to put my book out of its misery. After reading his analysis, one might seriously wonder how the manuscript ever sneaked by a dissertation committee at the University of Chicago, the editors of Oxford University Press, and so many book reviewers (including some premillennialists)—all of whom rather liked it.

One side of me would like to give a detailed, blow-by-blow response to Rausch's rejoinder. But his arguments are so *ad hominem* and personally directed that it would be hard to do so without sounding overly defensive and self-serving. I will gladly leave it to the readers of *JETS* and my book to judge the spirit and validity of the bulk of Rausch's comments. Though I choose not to answer Rausch in kind, I would like to draw attention to some of the more substantive issues in his rejoinder.

First, I am surprised by Rausch's claim that I caricature premillennialists in such a distorted and negative way. As indicated in my introduction, I wrote to correct those who "present premillennialism as a reactionary movement of the socially disinherited, psychologically disturbed, and theologically naive."<sup>1</sup> Throughout the book, I endeavored to show that

premillennialism must be seen as an authentic part of the conservative evangelical movement at the end of the nineteenth century that gained popularity among those conservatives who favored a rather literalistic interpretation of Scripture, and who recognized in premillennialism a way to remain both biblical and evangelical under difficult circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

With the exception of Rausch, no reviewer has called the book a negative or unsympathetic treatment of premillennialism. A reviewer in the *Christian Century* stated as follows: "Tempering his critical skills with a measure of empathy, Weber dispels a multitude of caricatures and stereotypes about premillennial-

<sup>1</sup>T. P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford, 1979) 6.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 42.

ism.”<sup>3</sup> Another reviewer in *The Journal of American History* observed that “the informed subjectivity of Weber’s study is simply outstanding. Only one who knew Fundamentalism from the inside could have written this book, yet the scholarship is unimpeachable.”<sup>4</sup> Writing in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, F. F. Bruce commented that “his approach is properly objective but not unsympathetic—no doubt some of his best friends are dispensationalists!”<sup>5</sup>

I know. These comments sound as though they were written by my mother under a number of aliases. I include them here to show that in comparison to other book reviewers, Rausch’s understanding of my approach to the subject is uniquely his own.

Second, I am still not convinced by Rausch’s objections to my saying that certain premillennialists “sounded” or “acted” like the representatives of American anti-Semitism. He contends that I chose such language to leave myself a “loop-hole” against the charge that I directly called anyone an anti-Semite. That is not the case. If I thought that these men were anti-Semitic, then I would have plainly said so. As I stated in my reply to his original article, I have never believed that these premillennialists were anti-Semites. Consequently I took pains to write carefully.

Furthermore I do not agree that my statements concerning the premillennialist reaction to the *Protocols* naturally draw the reader “to conclude that these premillennialists are anti-Semitic or at least imbued with a latent anti-Semitism.” To reinforce his argument, Rausch says that “if I wrote that ‘Weber sounded insane’ and ‘acted insane,’ the reader of a biography on Weber would certainly feel that he was questionable in his sanity.” Certainly if such statements were taken in isolation they could be very damaging. But if Rausch had been careful to present me as a normal and perfectly sane person in the rest of his work and had surrounded such statements by plain reminders that I was really in complete control of my senses, then he would be perfectly justified in using such language if he had uncovered some incontrovertible evidence that I, for perfectly explainable reasons, occasionally wore a lampshade in public. If any damage has been done to the reputations of these men, then they must bear the responsibility for it. Though Rausch and I obviously disagree on the significance of their statements, there can be no doubt that men like A. C. Gaebelain, Gray, Cook and Riley gave credence to the *Protocols* when they were being used by others for blatantly anti-Semitic purposes. Though the rest of their careers stand in direct opposition to the charge of anti-Semitism, I would still argue that their statements on the *Protocols* sounded anti-Semitic.

Third, I must disagree with Rausch’s assertion that my separation of the premillennialist character and the premillennialist eschatology is a “fantasy.” Is it not possible for someone to be a philo-Semite to the marrow of his bones but sound like an anti-Semite because of some aspect of his theology? I think so, as the recent trials of Bailey Smith, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, prove. Smith raised a furor during the recent presidential campaign when he observed at a large religious/political rally that God does not hear the

<sup>3</sup>N. Hatch in *Christian Century* 96 (October 31, 1979) 1067.

<sup>4</sup>C. E. Jones in *The Journal of American History* (June 1980) 165.

<sup>5</sup>F. F. Bruce in *EvQ* 7/2 (April-June 1980) 126.

prayers of Jews. Now that sounded anti-Semitic. But as even representatives of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith were forced to admit after meeting with Smith, he is no anti-Semite. The League's national director, Nathan Perlmutter, interviewed Smith and was satisfied that there was "no anti-Semitic intent" in his remarks. If Smith is no anti-Semite, then how could he make such a statement? Smith stated that it had been based on some "distinctive theological beliefs that he cannot compromise." According to Smith, "with all due respect to those dear people . . . God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew. For how in the world can God hear the prayer of a man who says that Jesus Christ is not the Messiah? It is blasphemous. . . . No one can pray unless he prays through the name of Jesus Christ." <sup>6</sup>

In much the same way many premillennialists, though they were sincerely pro-Zionist, could sound anti-Semitic on the *Protocols* because they believed they fit very nicely into their expectations for the last days. From my perspective, making a distinction between character and creed helps to explain the ironic ambivalence of some premillennialists in their views on the Jews.

Fourth, I am rather confused by Rausch's contention that I somehow cut corners in my research (and by inference was grossly unfair) by not checking it against the views of those who were personally close to the premillennialists I studied. In particular, Rausch feels that I should have interviewed Arno Gaebelein's son Frank in order to discover what the senior Gaebelein was really like. Let me respond in two ways. First, I fail to see how intimate knowledge about Gaebelein's taste in music and art or his behavior around the house would have helped me sort out the real issue at hand—that is, his relationships to the Jews. If I had been writing a biography of A. C. Gaebelein, then such information would have been indispensable. In light of my purpose for writing, however, such personal information was quite irrelevant. Second, Gaebelein was a public figure. He wrote many books and edited a widely-circulated magazine for many years. He was a frequent speaker at Bible and prophetic conferences. Consequently, historians are perfectly justified in drawing their conclusions from his public statements and behavior. One must assume that Gaebelein meant what he said and said what he meant. While the "private side" may be extremely informative on certain issues, it must never be allowed to skew the "public side."

I notice that before he wrote his rejoinder, Rausch did not call or write my seminary colleagues, former teachers, neighbors, or family to discover what kind of person I really am. He evidently believed that he could base his comments on my book alone. That is as it should be. People who write books and live in the public eye must expect to be judged there.

In conclusion, may we return to the issue that started this discussion? In his original article Rausch claimed that my book "epitomizes" those works that attack fundamentalism for its pro-Zionism, then accuse it of anti-Semitism. In neither his first article nor his rejoinder does he produce any evidence to substantiate the first charge. Concerning the second charge, we simply disagree as to whether my "acted" and "sounded like" anti-Semites, the qualifiers that precede and follow the section, and the full context of my arguments do in fact constitute an implied charge of actual anti-Semitism. Readers must decide for themselves.

Please allow me a final word. I have appreciated the scholarship of David

<sup>6</sup>*The Denver Post* (Sunday, December 21, 1980) 16J.

Rausch and wish him well in his future endeavors. His area of interest is important, and I expect him to contribute significantly to our understanding of the historic relationships between fundamentalists and Jews. But there should be a way for Christian scholars to disagree without casting aspersions on each other's integrity and motives. As historians in the fundamentalist/evangelical tradition attempt to interpret their own family heritage, they must be careful not to reproduce the rather negative and accusatory attitudes that characterized some of the more abrasive inhabitants of the family tree.