

EVANGELICAL ZIONISM

AN EVANGELICAL RESPONSE TO ISRAEL'S EVANGELICAL ENEMIES

PART II

Christian Anti-Zionists: In Their Own Words

In order to respond to Christian anti-Zionism it will be necessary to first provide a definition of Biblical Zionism. If Zionism is a movement supporting the return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland then Biblical Zionism sees that return taught in the Scriptures. For the evangelical that means he sees both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament unambiguously affirming the people of Israel's ancient and enduring connection to the land of Israel.

As already stated, no biblical theme is given greater prominence than Israel and God's intention to restore his people to their land and to himself. From the very beginning, when God told Abraham he would bring from him a great nation, land was promised. A specific piece of real ¹estate. And so that Abram, or Abraham, could not be mistaken about the reality of the land promise, he was later told by God to walk through the length and breadth of the ²land.

Much more could be said about Israel's possession, expulsion, partial restoration, exile, and dispersion. But our point today is that no biblical theme is more prominent, and that that theme climaxes in God's determination to restore Israel.

A second observation that can be made by anyone familiar with the biblical text is that of all God's declarations, none is more emphatic than those concerning his commitment to the Jewish people and their restoration to their land and to himself.³ According to the biblical account God reserves his strongest language for his covenant faithfulness to Israel.⁴ The God presented in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures has committed his reputation to the fulfilment of his covenant promises to Israel.⁵

If, as evangelicals claim, the Scriptures really do contain the declarations of the one true God then it is plain that God is the supreme ⁶Zionist.

Again, evangelicals generally claim to base their beliefs on the Scriptures. But today many evangelicals are actively aligning themselves against Israel and her presence in her ancient homeland.

¹ Genesis 12:1-3,7.

² Genesis 13:14-17.

³ e.g. Jeremiah 31:35-37; 32:41.

⁴ e.g. Ezekiel 36:5,6; Zephaniah 3:17-20.

⁵ e.g. Jeremiah 33:19-26.

⁶ Zechariah 8:2.

I believe that such a position is inconsistent. Either the Christian anti-Zionist should change his view and turn from antagonism towards Israel or he should abandon the profession that his belief system is based on Scripture.

In order to respond to some of the arguments of Christian anti-Zionism I will begin by quoting several of their past and present spokesmen.

John Stott was an English theologian considered by some to be the theologian who shaped the faith of a generation. Time Magazine in 2005 named him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.⁷

And what did Stott say about the Jews and their return to the land of Israel?

"Zionism, both political and Christian, is incompatible with biblical faith."⁸ He also made the claim that Zionism is "biblically anathema to the Christian faith."⁹

Let's consider Stott's claim that political Zionism is anathema. That is very strong language. It is usually understood to be a curse.

Political Zionism is Jewish nationalism. Many people groups have nationalistic movements - the Kurds, the Bosnians, the Armenians, for example. Yet, as far as we are aware Stott singled out only one form of nationalism as anathema.

The Jews can prove an historical connection to their ancient homeland that spans more than 3000 years. In addition there exist powerful moral and legal arguments to support their nationalism. Few people-groups can present stronger arguments.

Yet it was *Jewish* nationalism that Stott considered anathema.

Stott died in 2011. His influence on evangelicals, however, lives on.

Albert Pieters, another highly respected reformed theologian had this to say about the Jews:

"God willed that after the institution of the New Covenant there should no longer be any Jewish people in the world—yet here they are! That is a fact—a very sad fact, brought about by their wicked rebellion against God..."¹⁰

This is a very interesting quote, not only because it illustrates the attitude of many such theologians, but because it shows how inconsistent, and incoherent, their theology really is. Notice that Pieters' theological justification for his claim that there should no longer be any Jewish people is the New Covenant. Anyone familiar with what the Scriptures say about the

⁷ http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1972656_1972717_1974108,00.html

⁸ Stott's endorsement of Sizer's book: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/aw/cr/rRSO8676035D2R>

⁹ Don Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon: A Call to partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians*, Scottdale, 1995, p. 80.

¹⁰ Albertus Pieters, *The Seed of Abraham*, Grand Rapids, 1950.

New Covenant will know that it includes an unequivocal guarantee of the Jewish people's national perpetuity - along with the promise that the Jews will be planted in their own ¹¹land. The language is forceful and unambiguous and the theme appears throughout the Scriptures.

Not only does the biblical material upon which this theologian claims to base his view not support his view, it states the very opposite. It is one thing for a Christian to ignore a biblical teaching. It is quite another for him to align himself against an unequivocal declaration of Scripture.

Of course, Christian anti-Zionists have techniques by which they believe they can invert biblical statements. We will examine some of these later.

Gary Burge is a professor at Wheaton College. In a radio interview he said this:

"If I am thinking Christian-ly,¹² how should I think about the land? Too often in my conversations with Christians, they are actually doing Jewish theology. They are working out of Genesis and Ezekiel, and they're working out a theological view of the Middle East which is very much embedded in a Jewish worldview."¹³

Dr Burge objects to Christians developing their theology out of Genesis and Ezekiel and doing Jewish theology. His statement should be disturbing to every Christian. Genesis and Ezekiel, and the rest of what we call the Old Testament, constitute the Bible of Yeshua or Jesus and his first followers. If we are not "doing Jewish theology", as Burge puts it, then we are certainly not doing theology as Jesus and his first followers did.

This is a useful quote because it reveals one of the fundamental problems of the Christian anti-Zionist position. The covenants and prophecies of the Old Testament are effectively dispensed with.¹⁴

¹¹ Jeremiah 31:35-37; 32:41

¹² Burge is indeed "thinking Christianly" in the sense that his approach to Israel and her land exemplifies much of what has for centuries been so deeply flawed in Christendom's treatment of these issues. Barry Horner describes Burge's book *Whose Land? Whose Promise? What Christians Are Not Being Told about Israel and the Palestinians* thus: "...the overall thrust is uncompromisingly supercessionist, anti-Judaic and pro-Palestinian." Barry Horner, *Future Israel*, B&H Academic, 2007, p72.

¹³ <http://www.equip.org/audio/hank-hanegraaff-and-special-guest-dr-gary-burge/>
Burge's argument is similar in this more recent interview:
<http://www.moodyradio.org/radioplayer.aspx?episode=177938&hour=2>
Dexter Van Zile addresses some of Burge's misrepresentations:
http://www.cameraoncampus.org/resources/book-reviews/whose-land-whose-promise-what-christians-are-not-being-told-about-israel-and-the-palestinians/#.VogKlq_XeK0
http://www.jns.org/latest-articles/2014/2/3/time-for-some-answers-from-united-church-of-christ-on-pilgrim-press#.VohKjK_XerU=

¹⁴ Anti-Zionists, if they take *any* notice of the covenants of Scripture, are inclined to ignore their detail. More frequently they hold to a theological construct, a presupposed system of covenants having little connection with the covenants of Scripture.

Reverend Dr. Steven Sizer was until recently¹⁵ one of the most active Christian anti-Zionists. He is an Anglican priest and has associated with terrorists¹⁶ and Holocaust deniers.¹⁷

He stands strongly opposed to the biblical Zionist view that the scriptures teach the restoration of Israel. Sizer's position is that the New Testament "fulfills and annuls" the Old Testament.¹⁸

His charges against Israel include ethnic cleansing, occupation, institutionalized racism, and apartheid.¹⁹

Christian anti-Zionism is growing in influence and even in New Zealand we have a crop of committed anti-Zionists. One such is **Dr Philip Church**, a theology lecturer.²⁰ He is critical of those who believe Israel will be restored, as detailed in the Scriptures.²¹

Interestingly, Jesus rebuked his followers for *not* believing everything the OT prophets²² wrote. That rebukes still stands and Philip Church would do well to take heed.

In countries throughout the Middle East Christians are suffering persecution, expulsion and beheadings. Ancient Christian communities, even some that have existed for nearly two thousand years, are being wiped out.

¹⁵ John Bingham, 'Church bans 9/11 Israel conspiracy priest from using social media', *The Telegraph*, February 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11399986/Vicar-who-blamed-Israel-for-911-attacks-is-banned-from-writing-about-the-Middle-East.html>

¹⁶ <http://hurryupharry.org/2012/01/04/why-does-the-bishop-of-guildford-christopher-hill-tolerate-racism-within-his-diocese/>

¹⁷ <http://hurryupharry.org/2015/02/02/stephen-sizer-led-discussion-on-christian-responsibility-with-holocaust-denier-maria-poumier/>

¹⁸ Stephen R. Sizer, 'An Alternative Theology of the Holy Land: A Critique of Christian Zionism', 1999, http://archive.churchsociety.org/churchman/documents/Cman_113_2_Sizer.pdf

¹⁹ Stephen Sizer, 'Evangelical Alliance Consultation on the Holy Land', June 2003, <http://stephensizer.com/articles/eaconsultation.htm>

²⁰ Church teaches at Laidlaw College, Auckland, NZ (formerly Bible College of New Zealand). Apparently the institution in past years maintained a healthy attitude toward Israel. In more recent years Laidlaw has provided a platform for anti-Zionist theology, activism and worse. Articles in its June/July 2002 issue of Reality Magazine contained the following:

"...Jesus Christ, who was himself a Palestinian under occupation,..." p17

"... Israel's occupation of Palestinian land..." p27

Laidlaw staff contributed to the deeply flawed 2011 volume, *The Gospel and the Land of Promise*.

In 2012 Laidlaw hosted prominent and controversial Christian anti-Zionist Rev Dr Stephen Sizer. Sizer was also promoted by Tear Fund and World Vision.

²¹ Philip Church, 'Dispensational Christian Zionism: A Strange but Acceptable Aberration or a Deviant Heresy?', *Westminster Theological Journal*, 71:2, Fall 2009, <http://www.galaxie.com/article/wtj71-2-08>.

²² Luke 24:25,44.

The only Middle East state in which Christians are safe is Israel. And yet it is Israel against which Philip Church levels human rights accusations. Church has openly stated that he wants to see Israel isolated from the world community.²³ For anyone familiar with the events of the 1930's and 40's Church's words should be chilling. What begins with the isolation of Jewish people ends with something far worse.

Such Christian anti-Zionism is always built on a foundation of replacement theology, or supersessionism, a view that began to take hold in the second and third century. Next we will look more closely at replacement theology.

²³ Facebook, June 4 2012 and May 15 2012.