

EVANGELICAL ZIONISM

AN EVANGELICAL RESPONSE TO ISRAEL'S EVANGELICAL ENEMIES

PART IV

The Admission: Explicit and Implicit Acknowledgements

I hope to show that the argument between evangelical Zionists and those evangelicals who stand opposed to Israel is not over what the biblical text says but over what it means.

Replacement theologians will occasionally lapse into intellectual honesty and openly acknowledge that the biblical text does indeed state what the biblical Zionist believes.

Theologian Floyd Hamilton provided the following acknowledgement:

"Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures."¹

Hamilton is acknowledging that, taken at face value, the Old Testament does teach what the Biblical Zionist believes.

Loraine Boettner was a highly respected theologian. He stated:

"It is generally agreed that if the prophecies are taken literally, they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel in the land of Palestine with the Jews having a prominent place in that kingdom and ruling over the other nations."²

These are explicit admissions that the text does in fact state what the biblical Zionist believes. One would hope that the debate should have ended by now. But no. Replacement theologians employ schemes and creative techniques by which they argue the text is redefined,³ reinterpreted,⁴ annulled⁵ or "fulfilled in surprising ways."

While in moments of candour such theologians acknowledge the plain meaning of the text, more frequently the admission is merely implicit. It comes in the form of criticism that we

¹ Floyd E. Hamilton, *The Basis of the Millennial Faith*, Grand Rapids, 1942, p. 38

² Loraine Boettner, "Postmillennialism," ed. Robert G. Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, Downers Grove, 1977, p. 95. Quoted by Richard Mayhue, 'New Covenant Theology and Futuristic Premillennialism', *The Master's Journal*, 18/1 (Fall 2007) p.223. <https://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj18j.pdf>

³ NT Wright "Jesus spent His whole ministry redefining what the kingdom meant. He refused to give up the symbolic language of the kingdom, but filled it with such a new content that, as we have seen, he powerfully subverted Jewish expectations". N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Minneapolis, 2012.

⁴ Vlach provides examples of Ladd, Sizer, Burge, Riddlebarger arguing for "reinterpretation". Michael J. Vlach, 'The Hermeneutic of Reinterpretation', http://theologicalstudies.org/files/resources/Hermeneutic_of_Reinterpretation.pdf

⁵ Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionists on the Road to Armageddon*, Colorado, 2004, http://www.sizers.org/articles/ebook_sizer.pdf p74

take the text literally - that is, that we assign to the text the normal meaning of the words and phrases, the meaning as understood by those who were first to read the biblical texts.

The biblical Zionist points to vast quantities of scripture⁶ that foretell the restoration of Israel. Often God's promises to restore Israel are expressed in solemn covenants.⁷ And it is quite clear that Old Testament believers readily understood those promises and took them at face value.⁸ Not so with replacement theologians.

Western societies have a way of dealing with people who treat contracts or covenants the way replacement theologians do. Institutions have been developed to deal with such people. They are called courts and prisons. The words of solemn contracts really do have meaning. And evading or denying that meaning can have serious consequences - in civilized societies.

But for the God of replacement theology, failing to keep the terms of the covenant - the terms as they were understood by the original parties - is of no concern. The God of replacement theology appears to be a deceiver.

Of course, I am expecting a strong negative reaction from Christian anti-Zionists because of my comments. Presumably they will be intelligent critics, and some may even be scholarly. If they take time to communicate clearly I should be able understand their objections. However, if I apply the same approach to their words that they apply to Scripture, I will have no idea what they are saying. They may of course then object that I am simply avoiding the issue by claiming that their statements are unclear. They would be right.

Similarly, it is simply not credible for evangelicals to deny the plain teaching of Scripture concerning Israel by applying some other meaning to words and phrases than the meaning those words and phrases obviously convey. As we have seen, intellectually honest replacementists do acknowledge that the biblical text really does state what the biblical Zionist claims. It is not that the text is unclear. It is that the Christian anti-Zionist, for whatever reason, will not accept that meaning.

⁶ In the book of Isaiah *alone*, references to Israel's restoration include the following: 1:26,27; 2:1-5; 4:2-6; 9:7; 10:20-27; 11:6-16; 14:1,2; 19:23-25; 24:23; 26:6-9; 27:6,12,13; 33:17-24; 35:10; 40:1-11; 43:5,6; 49:8-26; 51:11; 52:1-12; 54:10-16; 56:6-8; 60:3-22; 61:4-11; 62:1-12; 65:17-25; 66:10-20.

⁷ Jeremiah 31:17-40 and Ezekiel 36:24-28; Deuteronomy 30:3-5 (29:1-30:10).

⁸ Daniel 9 provides an example of an OT believer taking the writings of Jeremiah at face value.