

FACTORS BEHIND BASIC ATTITUDES OF CHRISTIANS TOWARD ISRAELⁱ

Y: Hermeneutic Circle¹ with theological presuppositions X: Christian denomination according to Perkoⁱⁱ /	Evangelicals / Protestants		Protestants	Roman Catholics	Palestinian Christians
	01 Conservatives Protestant Fundamentalists	02 Conservatives 'Evangelicals'	03 Liberals	04 Western-/ Eastern Church and Subgroups	05 Lutherans: Mitri Raheb Anglicans: Naim Ateek

Language - Text - Meaning

01 Choice of Text	Luk 21:24; 24:44 <i>Perspective of Jesus; source of prophetic texts² is complete Scripture,</i>	<i>Prophecy is seen as fulfilled or understood in the allegorical sense; Torah, Concentration on some of the prophetic writings</i>	<i>Biblical prophecy is not or no longer relevant: notably Daniel; Zechariahs; Revelation</i> Not using 'proof texts' to formulate their theologies		<i>Torah Texts. No prophetic texts. The earth belongs to God. Ahab and Naboth, 1Kgs 21 Psalm 42 & 43 God hears the oppressed God includes non-Jews in Salvation (Matt 1:1-8, Ruth, Rahab and Bathsheba)³</i>
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¹ For G.R. Osborne, IVP 1991, Hermeneutics (a general term for Interpretation) comprises the principles and methods of interpreting meaning (both what it meant for the original as well as for today's reader). He distinguishes three perspectives: the scientific, the art of using those principles and thirdly the one in which the Holy Spirit plays the main role; furthermore three levels: exegesis (what the text meant), the devotional (what the text means for me) and the proclamational (what the text means for you - the third person). Hermeneutics is a spiral from text to context, from the original meaning to contextualization.

² Covering all relevant texts in contrast to excluding passages like Rom 9-11 concerning the salvation of Israel

³ Elias Chacour uses the Sermon on the Mount (Blessed are the peacemakers) as a political tool. In his book 'Blood Brothers' there is no comment on Islam. See analysis of 'Blood Brothers'.

<p><i>02 Modes of textual Interpretation (Exegesis-Hermeneutics) to arrive at understanding of meaning in contrast to Eisogesis (reading into the text) Degree of Literalism</i></p>	<p>literal / literalist⁴ = exclusively only lower textual criticism, based on linguistic studies of text = grammatical-historical Exegesis⁵, semantic Analysis interpretation of proof-texts of the whole biblical Canon of texts</p>	<p>less literal, more metaphorical. Texts are considered divinely inspired yet are often allegorically interpreted. Interpretation of proof texts. Higher textual criticism is not excluded</p>	<p>Higher textual criticism under scepticalness or rejection of the historicity, reliability and authority of the biblical writings.</p> <p>Opting for textual/ historic-critical analysis grounded in historical methods of the late 19th century German universities. Historic-textual criticism.⁶ More nuances in hermeneutics. Method also used by ‘Evangelical Non-Zionists’</p>	<p>Adaptation of textual-/historic-critical analysis. Metaphorical interpretations! Looking for universal meaning of texts.</p>
<p><i>03 Continuity of AT-NT⁷</i></p>	<p><i>Continuity, Unity, recognition of Jewishness of Jesus. Israel and Church are closely related but separate entities</i></p>	<p><i>Various positions, Church replaces Israel completely or temporarily, is seen as continuation of Israel or is coexistent</i></p>	<p><i>Discontinuity, separation from Jewish foundations</i></p>	

⁴ Literal / literalist - this needs to be defined or else it leads to misunderstandings

⁵ Figures of speech: allegoric interpretations, partially elements of Hebrew literary style (for instance parallelism) or Greek rhetoric, parable, metaphor etc., apocalyptic symbolism is perfectly part of a ‘literal’ understanding of Scripture.

⁶ This critical method received papal sanction in the Encyclica Divino Afflante Spiritu (under the inspiration by God’s Spirit) in 1943

⁷ Biblical theology on the basis of various observations is based on the understanding that both parts form a unity. Marcion taught the discontinuity between OT and NT and even went as far as requesting that the OT be removed from the Canon of Scripture, including all portions that refer to the OT. Bultmann followed suit but Westermann argued that in following that method the historic value of the OT would be lost and the NT would be deprived of its roots. - The NT contains at least 257 quotes and over 1100 allusions to the OT substantiating the close connection between the two parts. This is equally confirmed by the use of vocabulary, the typological relations between promise and fulfillment that otherwise would need to be separated. Equally, the unfolding of the divine revelation in history - “the backbone of biblical theology” - is also built on the relationship between the two parts (IVP, 1991, G.R.Osborne, The Hermeneutical Spiral).

P r e - U n d e r s t a n d i n g [P r e s u p p o s i t i o n s]

<p><i>04 Inspiration of Scripture - Textual Understanding</i></p>	<p><i>Recognition that the NT with the exception of Luce was written by Jews. Reliability. Trustworthiness. Inspired by God Scripture requires the Holy Spirit for its hermeneutics 2 Tim 3:16; 1Cor 4:6; Proverbs 3:5; 2Pet 1:16-2; Rev 22:17-21</i></p>	<p>Largely identical with other evangelical positions, with exceptions due to lack of original texts⁸</p>	<p><i>Reliability of some sources is considered as partially questionable</i></p>	<p>?</p>
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⁸ Consider the example of a statement of a local neoconservative Church (EMC): “the historical books of the OT and the NT are collections that were compiled by editors. Before these books came into being the stories were transmitted through oral tradition over decades and even centuries. Just as is the case today, certain aspects of these oral transmissions underwent changes in ancient times without, however, falsifying those stories in essence. The editors in compiling their collections always pursued specific goals. For this reason they selected from the oral traditions those variants that fitted their goals best. These stories therefore are not minutes or reports about the events concerned. They are stories fashioned to transmit a truth that was important to the author.” (For original text see German version of this site.) It is not clear how modern Methodist amillennialism can be reconciled with Wesley’s statement concerning the pre-millennial position: “...that comfortable doctrine, of which I cannot entertain the least doubt, as long as I believe the Bible.” (see George N.H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 1884, Vol. 1, p. 539 quoting the Methodist Historian Tyerman from the *Meth. Mag.* 1783, p. 498)

<p><i>05 Understanding of history⁹</i></p> <p><i>(This is part of theological presuppositions)</i></p>	<p><i>Theology of history: History as a spiral with the promised messianic kingdom in its center. Shoah as God's judgment of the Jews and of the Christian Church. (Plan of Salvation, God's plan for Israel and the Church) Israel is in the center of prophecy. God's credibility and honor is tied up with it. God is Creator. Creationism. The first as well as the second coming of Jesus / Yeshiva are predicted in the Old and in the New Testament.</i></p>	<p><i>Linear understanding of history, God's kingdom has already begun; optimistic view of the future. Prophecy fulfilled. Shoah is judgment on the Jews. Creationist-evolutionist View. The Gospel will change Culture.</i></p>	<p><i>Linear? Secular, materialist, humanist</i></p> <p><i>Israel is a nation like any other nation, a nation among nations</i></p> <p><i>Rejection of miracles on the basis of scientific thinking. Evolutionist perspective. Triumphalist view of the Church. One-world religion</i></p>	
<p><i>06 Antisemitism as a sub-conscious-,psychologic' - spiritual precondition¹⁰</i></p>	<p><i>absent</i></p>	<p><i>latent</i></p>	<p><i>present</i></p>	<p><i>predominant</i></p>

⁹ A philosophical and a theological issue. For instance: Dividing the historic sequence of events (in linear fashion or in the form of a spiral) into segments, periods or epochs (dispensations), for instance Early Civilisations, the Dark Ages, Medieval Age etc. (-Law, Grace, Israel, Church, Endtime etc.) – sharply separated or overlapping segments (times of transition). Equally included is the succession of particular events to come (for instance Rapture-Tribulation-Parousia or Tribulation-Rapture-Parousia etc.). Ernest Gaugler, a Christ-Catholic theologian according to the evangelical Journal Fundamentum (3/03. p/ 39) with regard to the teaching of Replacement Theology: this is not only an exegetical problem but also a case of a preconception, of a decision made prior to all else that may even be contrary to God's plans. N.B. the Christ- or Old-Catholic Church split from Rome in 1870. It rejects the Replacement Theology or the Theology of Substitution dominant in the Roman/Catholic Church. – Salvation History (Salvific History or Heilsgeschichte) is arguably the most important factor in how texts are being interpreted. See Bibliography, special Bibliographies – the Meaning of History.

¹⁰ Annual Report 2002, SIG: "...Their argumentation that they had not been anti-Semites may even be true according to their conscious perception. Nevertheless, their sub-conscious minds were thoroughly anti-Semitic ally programmed, for in their younger years they had experienced the influence of their parents and teachers who belonged to the generation of the Second World War. In addition, the Anti-Judaism that had been preached in the Churches over the Centuries had left its imprints..." (p. 17)

<i>07 How Anti-Semitism and the Shoah are understood</i>	<i>Fundamentally important = biblically predicted - satanic- Shoah as judgment – most intense immediately prior to the return of the Messiah</i>	<i>satanic / psychological / a matter of Education and therefore within human reach/</i>	<i>Self-imposed and therefore historically conditioned</i>	<i>justified</i>
<i>08 Intensity of Dogmatism, of prejudice</i>	<i>Whoever needs strong glasses will be unable to see without them.</i>			
<i>09 Origin of Motivation or reference point from which to argue</i>	<i>Historic Facts / Premillennialism Historic realities today¹¹</i>	<i>biblical statements – the man in the street / desk of the theologian Post-Millennialism Anticipation of the future¹²</i>	<i>Amillennialism</i>	
<i>10 History of culture (part of theological presuppositions)</i>	<i>Decidedly ‘anti-Babylonian’, Islam is false prophet, falsifying history</i>	<i>Ambivalent view of Islam, in-between position</i>	<i>Materialism and relativism, modernism, post-modernism, Islam as religion among others, Bible has nothing to say about contemporary history</i>	<i>Islam is treated as non-existent or irrelevant or as if it were a peace-loving parallel religion</i>
T h e o l o g y d e r i v e d f r o m p r e c e d i n g f a c t o r s				

¹¹Examples of authors arguing primarily on the basis of historic realities: Victor Mordechai(Jewish) and Ramon Bennett(Christian) argue on the basis of the historic development of Islam, using the biblical statements as confirmation. Pieter Bos on the other hand argues on the basis of the Missionary Mandate and a predominantly theological construct. Bos uses historic facts as confirmations.

¹² For instance Rick Joyner’s Theology of Reconciliation

<p><i>11 Theology derived (theological position) [Eschatology]</i></p>	<p>Christian Zionist¹³ Conservative Christian Zionist (Premillennialism) Support for Israel is hastening the Coming of Jesus <i>Israel's existence guarantees God's credibility</i></p>	<p>Non-/ Anti-Zionist (Postmillennialism) <i>The Church has taken the place of Israel</i> (+/- Replacement Theology¹⁴)</p>	<p>Anti-Zionist (Amillennialism) Clear rejection of the biblical notion of Greater Israel. ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH RELIGION BUT WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW. (Replacement Theology)</p>	<p>Anti-Zionist, Palestinian Liberation Theology¹⁵ Hermeneutics derived from protestant and catholic liberation theology. (Replacement Theology)</p>	
<p><i>12 Hermeneutics - Principles of theological interpretation for the present</i></p>	<p>General and specific <i>Typological interpretation¹⁶</i> <i>Principle: OT that NT does not declare superceded still applies or is yet waiting for its fulfillment¹⁷</i></p>				

¹³ Preferably 'Biblical Zionist' in Claude Duvernoy's sense

¹⁴ Replacement Theology or of Doctrine of Substitution (Substitutionary Theory) – The Church definitely or temporarily replaces Israel (depending on dispensational rigor), however one may want to justify it (mainly for reasons of anti-Semitism)

¹⁵ Perko: the experiences of Palestinian Churches AND the lack of biblical theology justifying Israel provide reasons for neutrality and even opposition.

¹⁶ Perko's 'Protestant Fundamentalists' are closest to the messianic Jews as far as their understanding of Scripture is concerned. Rabbinic interpretation distinguishes four levels of understanding: Pshat - the literal; Remez - the hint to a deeper truth; Drash or Midrash - the allegoric or homiletic and Sod- the mysterious level. (The latter two are problematic in that they can particularly well be misused for Eisegesis - the reading into the text .) Mystical interpretation dates back to the Middle Ages. According to David Stern (JNTC 1992) the grammatical-historical exegesis limits itself to the level of Pshat, although the level of Remez must not be excluded as God may hint at something that he may make clear at a later stage, especially in typology (compare the story of Joseph). Peshet is a subcategory of Midrash and concerns passages prophesying events. See <http://www.xenos.org/ministries/crossroads/OnlineJournal/issue3/mtappc.htm>

¹⁷ J. Gerloff addressing the issue of the land: Where is it referred to in the NT? points to the fact that even central issues such as whether or not Jesus is truly the Messiah can only be answered on the basis of the OT. See Acts 18:28. Also see Acts 1:6, where Jesus does not correct the question but replies according to 24:14. Also compare Matt 5:18 and Acts 3:21 and Rom 11:29. „If the NT had really annulled the promises of the land, it would need to be noted explicitly. As long as this is not the case, the duty of proof lies with those who wish to separate Zionism from Judaism. And as long as they haven't presented that proof, it is very likely that the suspicion is justified that 'anti-Zionism' is merely a new variant of an age-old phenomenon that since the 19th century has been called 'anti-Semitism'. (Juden-ja, Zionismus-nein) 19.5.03 www.israelnetz.de

P o l i t i c a l P o s i t i o n b a s e d o n t h e o l o g i c a l u n d e r s t a n d i n g

<p><i>13 Political position</i></p>	<p><i>uncritically pro-Israel.¹⁸ Supporting right-wing, incl. Settlements under conservative Gvts, lobbying U.S.-Gvt</i></p>	<p><i>Critical of Israel's treatment of Palestinians : either side is in the wrong - or else</i></p>	<p>Similar to the RCC Neutrality or opposition to Israel's land claims</p> <p><i>pro-Palestinian attitude</i></p>	<p>Changing Policy! Now secular, diplomatic position. 1993 recognition of Israel but no policy that defends Israel on the basis of Biblical texts. Agreements with both Israel & PA. Therefore NEUTRAL OR OPPOSITIONAL POLICIES TOWARD Israel¹⁹</p>	<p>Zionism is considered to be reanimating the nationalist tradition within Judaism.</p>
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¹⁸This accusation in case of the protestant theologian and historian Claude Duvernoy is not justified. Consistently he warns not to see Israel as a nation of 'little saints.'

¹⁹ Behind this argument are political concerns over free access to religious sites for Christians in Arabic countries (as if the Israeli would forbid it). This is said to lead to an attitude of neutrality "or a certain tendency in favor of the Palestinians." Criticism of 'Israel's "occupation" of the West Bank. [Why does Perko not interpret the term „Occupation“ according to the historic-critical method?]

P r e o c c u p a t i o n s a n d c o n s e q u e n c e s

<p><i>14 Principal Themes</i></p>	<p><i>Narrow focus on restoration of the State of Israel as precondition for the second coming of Jesus, End-time Unfulfilled Prophecy will yet be fulfilled; God has promised the land as part of his alliance with Israel</i></p>	<p><i>Land belongs to God. Israel has no prophetic significance.</i></p>	<p>Broader themes like justice and peace, God as creator and sustainer, deliverer from oppression and danger. More refined hermeneutics, avoiding topic of End-Times as well as Bible as comment to what happens in the Middle-East</p>	<p><i>Exodus as liberation from pharaonic slavery. God = owner of the land</i></p>	
<p><i>15 Further Consequences</i></p>	<p>(denying Palestinians right of land) denigration of Palestinian rights - Gen 17:20, Isa 19:24-25 Concept of Greater Israel Jerusalem entirely in Jewish hands = renewed faith in the exactness and validity of the Bible</p>		<p>Protestant position parallels RC position</p>	<p>The world's largest Christian denomination resists biblical interpretations that see the land as belonging to anyone other than God .</p>	<p>Jesus > Political and Spiritual Liberator</p> <p>Palestinian Typology Israel = today's Pharaoh Palestinians = the true Israel. Let Israel move away from the narrow concept of God</p>
<p><i>16 Integration of various of the above factors</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Variety of possible combinations and intensities produces a whole spectrum of positions as varied as those of a sound mixer's</p>				

Michael Perko's thesis: Since Scripture (the choice of text and interpretation) leads to a theology that in turn serves as a filter in itself through which further Scripture is interpreted, it is wrong to believe that one can interpret Scripture without any prior theological understanding. *(The so-called hermeneutical circle describes the process of interpretation and understanding in which one's personal pre-understanding of the interpreter, one's experience, one's worldview etc. is included and which determines the formulation of one's theology that is built upon it. According to Old Testament theologian W. Kaiser Jr., "Calvin's theological thinking directed his exegesis while his exegesis contributed to the formation of his theology." (An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 251) Perko: The personal-theological position determines the personal-political one. This applies for Jews and*

Gentiles alike. *According to Perko the post enlightenment belief in the separation between Religion and Politics is no longer possible today.*

What is the relationship between primarily theologically determined exegesis and the primarily politically determined understanding? If in our Christian thinking it is no longer possible to separate the two domains - Theology and Politics - if, in other words, Christians cannot hold a political position without a theological underpinning, what foundation do non-Christians have for their position? It obviously must be the one that is given them by the contemporary worldview, in our case humanism and post-modern thinking in which language, culture and society determine our thinking.

Is it possible to arrive at a political understanding of Israel from the 'Text' of our time in the largest sense, from the media, the daily news without seeking to integrate it in a meaningful way into the context of world history as we know it? In other words without an understanding of history?

According to our personal understanding of history we interpret the events of our time. These events confirm or contradict our understanding of history. Therefore we are facing something of a 'hermeneutical circle' here as well. If this is the case, where do we take our methods of exegeting the "text"? If our methods of interpretation are not originating outside the system we live in (from the Hebrew thinking of Scripture) are we borrowing them from the norms of thinking of our time (from politics, media and western worldview that claims that man is basically good) and see in Israel merely a nation among other nations, a nation that allegedly takes away the land of another nation. In that case we have nothing but a Roman Catholic understanding of Israel: „Israel's existence has nothing to do with religion, but is a matter of international law.” (M. Perko)

In other words, Theology (Religion) is repressed and excluded from history, Israel has no place in theology anymore. This is why the term Replacement Theology is used in reference to the historic Church's understanding of Israel

What is meant by 'replacement theology'? Israel has been replaced by the Church. (Succession Theology is another way of looking at it.) Where theology is excluded from the interpretative process, it, too, needs to be replaced by something else. If Theology does not guide our understanding of Israel it is Humanist Philosophy, Post-Modernism or in this case, 'International Law.' The interpretative process is impossible without pre-understanding, a method of interpretation and a framework made up of the parameters of hermeneutics, religious or otherwise.

ⁱ Matrix [X/Y] of determining factors behind basic attitudes of Christians toward Israel (pro-/anti-etc.) - comparing elements that constitute the hermeneutic circle or spiral - including factors that belong to the theological pre-understanding [presuppositions] behind this process (based on the implicit structure in the perspective of M. Perko *but further developed where needed*)

ⁱⁱ Based on, adapted and enlarged from Michael Perko, S.J. April 2003 "Jerusalem in Slavery"
- www.bc.edu/research/cj1/meta-elements/texts/articles/perko03.htm