

The Balfour Declaration – One Hundred Years Later

Written by Victoria Radin

The Balfour Declaration was issued by the British government during World War I, announcing support for the establishment of a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. The British promised that if the Allies won the land of Palestine from the Ottoman Empire, the land would be given as a homeland for the Jewish people. This was, in part, a reward to a Russian-born British, Jewish chemist, Chaim Weizmann for his invaluable contribution toward the Allies’ victory in World War I.□

“His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object...” (November 2, 1917)

This promise was dependent upon the British defeating the Ottoman Empire in World War I, which they did with the Lord’s help. This was the beginning of openly declared Christian-Jewish cooperation begun by Balfour.

“The Balfour Declaration was the first real initiative for Christian Zionism, and it was based in the Bible. It set the stage for Jewish and Christian partnership, and the future of that relationship has to continue in precisely that way: based in Israel and the Bible...” — Rabbi Tuly Weisz, director of Israel365. □

Isaiah records God’s plan for this partnership.

“Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the Gentiles, and set up My standard for the peoples; they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders...” (Isaiah 49:22)

Following the Protestant Reformation, in the late 16th and early 17th Centuries, Bibles once again became available to the laity. The English Puritans began to publish books on the biblical promises that spoke of the blessed future of the Jewish people. Then, in 1727, a young German nobleman named Count von Zinzendorf gathered persecuted Christians to his large estate in Germany to pray twenty-four hours daily. These Christians, the Moravians, believed that the whole world had to hear the Gospel and that Israel would have to become a nation before the

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Lord's return.

Many Christians throughout the history of the Church longed to see the restoration of the Nation of Israel because they knew from the Scriptures that it would precede the Lord's return. Those Christians that interpreted, literally, the prophecies predicting the return of the Jews to Israel were known as Christian Zionists. They spent much time in prayer asking God to fulfill His Word in the same way that Daniel prayed for the return of His people from exile in Babylon. The Jews themselves have best described the importance of the role of Christian Zionists in the history of the Jewish people. In 1757, Rabbi Emden of Hamburg said:

"...For if it had not been for the Christians, our remnant would surely have been destroyed, and Israel's hope would have been extinguished amidst the Gentiles, who hate us because of our faith....But God, our Lord, has caused the Christian wise men to arise, who protect us in every generation." (The End of History—Messiah Conspiracy, Philip N. Moore, 1996, p. 590)

It is clear that Christian Zionism, as it is known, existed long before the renowned Theodore Herzl sought in 1897 to establish a Jewish homeland in Israel. In fact, it was a Christian Zionist, Chaplain William H. Hechler, a Restorationist Anglican clergyman, that motivated Herzl in his Zionist activities, serving as a mediator between Herzl and the British government.

During W.W.II, true Christians continued to play an important role in the preservation of the Jewish people. In 1989 the names of 6000 'righteous Gentiles', who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust, had been recorded in the Archives of Yad VaShem Holocaust Museum in Israel. It was expected that the number would reach 7000 within a few years. After W.W.II, the Jewish author Sholem Asch, wrote:

"...Christianity also distinguished itself, in the particular of rescuing Jewish children, by the highest degree of self-sacrifice. It may be stated without exaggeration that almost the entire remnant of Israel, which was found in the liberated countries—no matter how small its number—has the Christians to thank for its preservation. (The End of History—Messiah Conspiracy, Philip N. Moore, 1996, p. 570)

It is clear that the fate of the Church and the fate of Israel are inextricably intertwined, having the shared heritage of the Hebrew Bible. The New Testament parable of the Good Samaritan

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speaks allegorically of the proper relationship between true Christians and the nation of Israel. When no one else would help the dying Jew, not even his own brethren, the Samaritan (non-Jew) came to the rescue.

“Then Jesus answered and said: ‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.”’ (Luke 10:30-37)

True Christians love and do not persecute the Jewish people who are the apple of God's eye (Zech. 2:8). True Christians long to see the salvation of the people of Israel because true Christians long to see the return of the Lord.

“Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, ‘O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!’”(Jeremiah 31:7)