Clergy Discipline Measure 2003

In the Clergy Discipline Tribunal – Diocese of Winchester

Re the Reverend Dr Stephen Robert Sizer

WITNESS STATEMENT OF

PROFESSOR DAN MARK COHN-SHERBOK

I, **DAN COHN-SHERBOK**, of Old Coach House, Bwlchllan, Wales SA488QJ **WILL SAY** as follows:

Biography

1. I am Emeritus Professor of Judaism at the University of Wales, and a Reform rabbi. I have served as a visiting and honorary professor at ten other universities. I am the author and editor of over 100 books including four books dealing with antisemitism. I have acted as an expert witness on antisemitism for the Counter Terrorism Agency of the Crown Prosecution Service – most notably I was an expert witness at Leeds Crown Court where two defendants were convicted of anti-Semitism in 2009.

2. I was ordained a Reform rabbi at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio. I was a Chaplain of the Colorado House of Representative, and an Honorary Colonel Aide-de-Camp of New Mexico. I have served as a rabbi in the United States, England, Australia and South Africa.

3. I am or have been a visiting professor or honorary professor at 10 international universities, and I have received an honorary Doctorate in Divinity from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York City.

4. I have written or edited 100 books dealing with the Jewish heritage. Four of these are specifically on the topic of anti-Semitism: The Paradox of Anti-Semitism (2007); Antisemitism (2002); The Crucified Jew: Twenty Centuries of Christian Anti-Semitism (1993); and Understanding the Holocaust (1999). I have also written several books dealing with the history of Israel: The Palestine-Israeli Conflict (2001),

Introduction to Zionism and Israel: From Ideology to History (2011); Debating Palestine and Israel (2014).

How I know Stephen

5. Some years ago I was writing a book about Christian Zionism and Messianic Judaism, and I contacted Stephen. He had completed a PhD on this subject and had published a book critical of Christian Zionism (Christian Zionism: Road Map to Armageddon) (2004). He very kindly helped me with resource material, and we remained in contact ever since. More recently we both gave lectures at a conference in Salisbury about the Palestine-Israeli conflict. I wrote in support of Stephen when he previously faced an ecclesiastical tribunal.

Zionism, Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism

6. At the end of the 19th century, Zionism was a relatively small movement within the Jewish world. Prominent among early religious Zionists was Yehuda hai Alkalai who argued that Jewish settlers should establish Jewish colonies in Palestine in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. A similar view was adopted by Zwi Hirsch Kalischer who maintained that the messianic era will not take place immediately. Rather, the redemption of the Jewish people will occur gradually through the ingathering of the Jewish nation in their ancestoral home. Following in the footsteps of such religious Zionists, Abraham Isaac Kook--the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Palestine--formulated a vision of messianic redemption integrating the creation of a Jewish state.

7. Alongside these religious Zionists, secular Zionists have been preoccupied with the probelm of anti-Semitism rather than messianic deliverance. Moses Hess, for example, argued that anti-Jewish sentiment is unavoidable; in his view, the only solution to the Jewish problem is the creation of a Jewish state. Echoing such sentiments, Theodor Herzl espoused the creation of a Jewish homeland and undertook political steps to bring about its deliverance.

8. However, in opposition to both religious and secular Zionists Jewish voices across the religious spectrum were raised against the creation of a Jewish homeland. Ultra-Orthodox critics of Zionism were united in their oppositon to what they regarded as a betrayal of traditional Jewish values. According to these opponents, it is forbidden to accelerate divine redemption through human efforts. Thus the Zionism movment was regarded as a demoinc force leading the Jewish people astray. Paralleling this critique, liberal Jews assailed Zionism as a misguided utopian scheme. The

spokesman for American Reform Judiasm, Isaac Mayer Wise, for example, proclaimed: 'We denounce the whole question of a Jewish state as foreign to the spirit of the modern Jew.' Jewish socialists as well were hostile to the creation of a Jewish homeland.

9. In asssessing Stephen Sizer's views, it should be remembered that opposition to the state of Israel was widely held by many Jews from various sectors of the Jewish world at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. To believe that Israel should not have been created is not *ipso facto* an antisemitic attitude. Nor is opposition to Israeli policy. It is true that some critics of Israel particularly in the Arab world hate Jews. I have dealt with such attitudes at length in my book Antisemitism in relation to the emergence of modern Arab antisemitism. However, it is simply not the case that all critics of Israel--past and present--are Jew-haters. Stephen Sizer, like a number of Jews and non-Jews--is highly critical of modern-day Israel. Nonetheless, I do not believe that Stephen Sizer hates Jews. I have never believed he is an antisemite. But I think he is an anti-Zionist.

10. Let me give you an example of how hatred of Jews is expressed in modern times: During the last fifty years a vast quantity of antisemitic literarure has been published in Muslim countries utilizing religous as well as racial motifs. Some of this literature such as Hitler's Mein Kampf, Henry Ford's International Jew and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, has been translated into Arabic and is widely available. Other writings have exploited sterotypical images of the Jew inherited from the past In all cases, these negative depictions of Jewry have been reinterpreted to express antipathy towards Jews; repeatedly the Jew is portrayed as an evil force determined to corrupt and exploit the society in which he lives. In addition, Jews are presented as forming a global conspiracy intent on dominating world affairs.

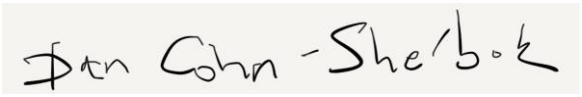
11. Typical of such diatribes against the Jewish community is the tract Holy War and Victory written by Abd al-Halim Mahmoud, the former Rector of Cairo's al-Azhar University. In his view, the struggle for Isalm is depicted as a struggle against Satan:

> Among Satan's friends--indeed his best friends in our age--are the Jews. They have laid down a plan for undermining humanity, religiously and ethically. They have begun their work to implement this plan with their money and their propoganda. They have falsified knowledge, exploited the pens of writers and bought minds in their quest for the ruination of humanity.

12. Such denunbciations of Jewry parallel medieval polemics. This is contemporary antisemitism. What Stephen Sizer has said or written is not antisemitism.

Statement of truth

I believe the facts and matters in this statement to be true.



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DAN COHN-SHERBOK

Date: 16 October 2020