

Christians and Israel

Are Christians Israel's supporters or its detractors?

Israel, in little more than 50 years, has developed into an advanced and powerful nation. It has done that despite almost unending war and having absorbed and integrated over a million immigrants. The Arabs and other Moslems are not the only ones who do not wish it well; many others are hostile to the Jewish state. Who are Israel's real friends?

What are the facts?

True friends of Israel. The history of the Jews is a hard one in their relationship with the Christians, among whom they have lived for almost twenty centuries. It is punctuated by terrible pain that their hosts inflicted on them. There were the Crusades, there was the Inquisition, there were expulsions from and persecutions in many countries, and uncounted pogroms. It culminated in the Holocaust, in which one-third of the world's Jews were slaughtered. The perpetrators of this worst crime in history were Christians – Protestants and Catholics. Church authorities could have prevented and stopped this genocide. Sad to say, Pope Pius XII, who could have threatened with excommunication all participants in this crime, kept silent.

In 1948, on the ashes of the Holocaust, Jews created the State of Israel. The United Nations had demanded that "Palestine," where strife between Jews and Arabs had been rampant for decades, be divided into a Jewish and an Arab state. The Jews accepted this partition; the Arabs rejected it out of hand and, with the armies of five nations, launched the first of their many wars against the nascent Jewish state. Israel prevailed in that war and in all subsequent ones. Israel's unceasing efforts to make peace were unsuccessful. It does not seem likely that peace will come in the foreseeable future.

One solid friend of Israel came to the fore. Today, American Evangelicals are the staunchest supporters of Israel. This support is largely based on the faith shared with the Jews that the land of Israel was willed by God to the children of Israel. It is a primary reason for America's friendship and solidarity with Israel. The Evangelicals believe that their end-of-time scenario will be hastened by the establishment of a Jewish state in that land.

Jews fully reciprocate the love that the Evangelicals feel for Israel. Christian institutions in Israel thrive and have the support and full protection of the government. Christian schools, Christian churches and other Christian

institutions prosper. A large Christian pilgrimage center is to be built in cooperation with American Evangelicals. A Christian embassy in Jerusalem represents the interests of Christians in Israel and serves as messenger about Israel throughout the world.

Is "divestment" the new anti-Semitism? In contrast to the Evangelicals' solid support of Israel stand certain "mainline" leftists-oriented churches. On the forefront are the mainline Presbyterians. In 2000, they launched a campaign to divest from five U.S. companies (Caterpillar, Motorola, United Technologies, ITT, and CitiGroup), which they claim are complicit in Israel's mistreatment and suppression of the Arabs under their administration.

The United Church of Christ (UCC) took similar action and it seems that the Episcopalians hierarchy is also contemplating such a course. The Anglicans, the British equivalent of the Episcopalians, passed a similar resolution last year. Gratifyingly, most of the rank and file of these churches entirely disagrees with their leaders. It provokes their outrage and has also caused bipartisan condemnation in Congress.

As far as the robust Israeli economy is concerned, any possible divestment by those churches would not be much more than a pinprick. But what is significant and important is that, in hypocritical self-righteousness, those church leaders have cloaked their antipathy toward the Jews in the socially more acceptable mantle of anti-Zionism or anti-Israelism. Would those elders recommend that their church divest from Spain for their "suppression of the Basques," from China for the "subjugation of the Tibetans," or from the Arab countries for their ruthless exclusion and worse of their fellow Christian citizens, the genocide of their blacks, and for the mistreatment of women? Of course not – it is Israel, the only democratic country in the entire Middle East, that merits the condemnation of the leaders of those mainline churches. It makes one wonder, doesn't it!

Jews and the State of Israel can rejoice in the solid friendship and the sturdy support of American Evangelical Christians. Also, the Roman Catholic Church, under the wise guidance of the saintly late John Paul II, has recognized its crimes against the Jews over the centuries and has asked for forgiveness and understanding. It is only the hypocritical leaders of certain mainline Protestant churches who, against the will and belief of their rank and file, derogate the State of Israel and promote the phony issue of divestment of companies that supposedly support its alleged mistreatment of the Arabs under its administration and the violation of their human rights.

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