



UGLY TRUTH OF BDS:

Signs of a rift in Judeo-Christian Bond?

The year was 30 A.D. the Jewish Leader of a new sect of Judaism that would first be called the Nazarenes (not to be confused with the Ebionites) had just left the earth. The Nazarenes were unified in their belief in Jesus as their Savior and Lord as fulfilled in the Jewish scriptures as promised in the Torah, the writings and the Prophets that make up the Hebrew Bible. According to Jerome and Epiphanius noteworthy figures in church history, the Nazarenes were the original Jewish converts of Christianity.

By the year 70 A.D. Rome conquered Jerusalem, the majority of the original 12 disciples and Paul were dead and the once unified group of believers began to spread out and denominate into various groups as they interpreted what was written in the Hebrew Bible and regarding the Gospels and letters of Paul.

What was a united group of believers that according to the Bible added nearly 3,000 believers in one day began to spread throughout the world, some closer to obeying the literal words in the Bible, and others adding new commentaries and interpretations based on the events of the beginning of the new millennium.

From the very beginning of the journey that leads to today there have been some unfortunate bloody and ugly moments regarding whether what each side believed was correct, but today it has led to the common understanding that there are some shared values between the Jews and what the Nazarenes later were called, Christians. The common ground is called Judeo-Christian values based on Jewish scriptures, with a Jewish messiah and 12 Jewish disciples. While some Christians practice closer to the Nazarene way of living as proselytes or foreigners grafted into Israel, others do not have as much of a practicing common ground with Jews.

From One to 41,000, is the Kingdom Divided?

Though the Jews do not accept the deity of Jesus, the Hebrew Bible is the front of the Christian Bible, so in a sense the two are almost inseparable in the foundation of their beliefs. Both groups believe in a Messiah, one group doesn't believe he came in A.D. 30, the other side does.

While what started out as one group of people unified in belief and interpretation of the Bible, which for the most part aligned with foundational Jewish values has now ballooned to approximately 41,000 Christian denominations according to Pew research.

During this one to 41,000 process in less than 2,000 years unfortunately the previously mentioned bloody and ugly moments has a root, it is called anti-Semitism. Whether it be the Catholic doctrine that the Jews were responsible for Jesus' crucifixion or other doctrines from some (not all) of the "church fathers" saying they "hate the synagogue and hate the Jews" or "their rabbis should be threatened with death if they continue to teach" or "and your cities ruined by fire, that the fruits of your land be eaten by strangers before your very eyes; that not one of you be permitted to enter your city of Jerusalem 3", anti-Semitism has a long history.

In all fairness to say that the Jews didn't persecute those who initially held close to their foundations but just with the belief that the Messiah had come would be one-sided. However with both sides responsible for some guilt, unfortunately the Jews have come out on the heavier hand being laid on them over the past two millennia.

This root as covered in our previous issue has revealed itself again in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. What has been mainly focused in areas of entertainment, commerce and education has now started to spread again in Christianity.

The news getting the most attention in the past month in this area is the U.S. Presbyterian Church's 310-303 vote to divest from Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions.

Supporters of the resolution said those companies were involved with demolition and surveillance activities against Palestinians in the West Bank, also known as Judea and Samaria.

Unfortunately this is not the first move of this type from the Presbyterian Church, in 2004 they voted 431 to 62 in July to initiate a process of phased selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel. In 2006 they softened the language, but still used the same approach.

From July 2012 to June 2014 there was a brief window of investment rather than divestment.

Other church bodies to pass divestment resolutions include the World Council of Churches, Mennonite Central Committee, Quaker American Friends Service Committee, United Church of Christ, the Church of England synod and the United Church of Canada in Toronto.

In addition to Protestant churches, the mother of all churches, the Catholic Church with 1.2 billion people headed by Pope Francis has now entered the fray.

With his recent visit to the Holy Land, Francis went to the Palestinian regions first, kissed on the Palestinian side of the security barrier that has helped cut down terrorism in Israel, then interrupted Prime Minister Netanyahu who was stating the Jewish Jesus spoke Hebrew in the Hebrew nation to say that he didn't and that he spoke Aramaic, and stood silently next to Abbas when he called for Israel to release all Palestinian terrorist prisoners.

So what is the root cause of this anti-Semitic activity in churches? Some, if not most, do not believe the promise in the Bible that says the land belongs to the Jewish people and they believe Israel is occupying Arab land.

Since Israel and Jewish people are the victim of these attacks, we wanted to offer a Jewish opinion on the latest activity in the church against Israel.

We had a chance to secure comments from David Zeit the Executive Director of United with Israel, a grassroots non-profit that is garnering global support for Israel with over two million supporters.

"The BDS movement isn't just an anti-Israel movement, to me being anti-Israel is being anti-Semitic, they go hand in hand," said Zeit.

"Israel is the home of the Jewish people and we are sovereign over the land for the first time in about 2,000 years. In those 2,000 years despite our contributions to our host countries, we've been told that we cannot stay there, mostly due to anti-Semitism and persecution. Israel has been nothing but a blessing to the world for the past 66 years."

He added, "The BDS movement seeks to disqualify the Jewish people in its own homeland, and the movement has been successful in their efforts to marginalize and demonize the Jewish state."

Part of the mission of United with Israel is to counter anti-Semitic movements like BDS by helping people to be more educated about the rhetoric that this movement puts out.

When asked his thoughts about Christians boycotting and divesting Israel, Zeit commented, "I'm a little surprised to see this type of activity coming out of Christian churches. Over the last few decades Christian-Jewish relations has been at an all-time high, we still have the very large Evangelical community in the U.S. that stands behind Israel."

"Israel has been nothing but a blessing to the world for the past 66 years," said Zeit.

For those Christian groups that are supportive of Israel, he added, "It is greatly appreciated. The love and support of Christian groups that visit Israel has been remarkable and inspiring. We constantly are fighting an uphill battle, so whenever we see encouragement that promotes solidarity it fuels our (United with Israel) passion for promoting the truth about Israel."

For Christians on the fence of supporting Israel or anti-Semitism Zeit said, "Don't yield to ignorance. You have to educate yourself on the truth of what Israel actually is and not what the delegitimizers want you to believe it is. Come to Israel if possible, see what a miracle it is and how it is a direct result of the Jewish people actually returning to our natural habitat."

Zeit noted that despite foreign attempts to cultivate the land while Israel was dispersed their efforts were unsuccessful, the land was barren. In contrast he said, the current flourishing agricultural environment in Israel is a direct result of the people being back in their land.

He left us with three things those that are pro-Israel can do to support the nation:

1. Visit Israel
2. Subscribe and spread the word about United with Israel and their fair, balanced and verified news and discuss it with your community
3. Speak to your government representatives and let the know how you feel about Israel

We are beginning to again see a negative effect of the one to 41,000 divergence, may any future convergence be based on the true foundations of both faiths and not on false foundations of anti-Semitism be their veiled or in the daily headlines. For those that hold to the beginning of the Bible, let us remember this promise

I will bless those that bless you and curse those that curse you.

References:

1. Saint John Chrysostom: Eight Homilies Against the Jews - http://www.preteristarchive.com/ChurchHistory/0386_chrysostom_adversus-judeas.html
2. Martin Luther, On Jews & Their Lies - http://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1543_luther_jews.html
3. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho - http://www.preteristarchive.com/ChurchHistory/0150_justin_trypho-jew.html