



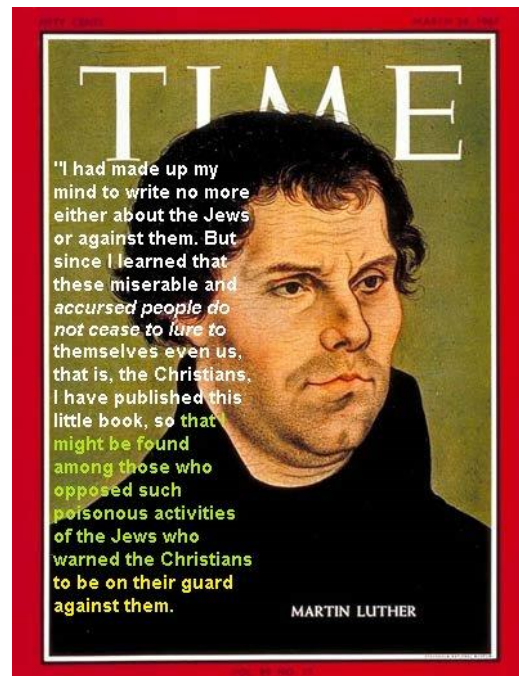
Separation Between Church and God

By Rev. Gary Cristofaro

“We worry a great deal about the problem of church and state. Now what about the church and God? Sometimes there seems to be a greater separation between the church and God than between the church and state”. (1)

Recently, the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA) has overwhelmingly approved a resolution calling on the American government to halt all aid to Israel if building in Judea and Samaria continues. It also demands that Israel “end its occupation” and recognize a Palestinian state. The Statement also bragged of being in league with other anti-Israel churches, saying the ELCA was joining “the growing number of US churches that have endorsed economic acts of conscience in support of Palestinian freedom and human rights including the United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church (USA) the United Church of Christ, and others.” (2)

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (3) How is it possible for such a large segment of the “church” to be so misguided and wondering from His path? The threats to Israel’s very existence manifest in many forms. Of course, the most immediate is the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran. In addition, many attempt to de-legitimize her with their spurious apartheid comparisons. However, Israel’s most sinister threat is the peril of being betrayed by her best friends. The prophet Zechariah described this type of friend from the nations when he said “...they helped-but with evil intent” (Zechariah 1:15b).



For decades now, Islamic leaders have verbalized and made their intentions abundantly clear. They believe that a Palestinian state in the heartland of Israel represents the beginning of the end of Israel. Sadly, even many who acknowledge the existential threat of a nuclear Iran, fail to recognize the treachery of the two-state solution. The two-state solution is just a politically correct way of saying the “final solution”.

The resolution from the ELCA speaks directly of Judea and Samaria. God told the prophet Ezekiel to prophecy over the mountains of Israel. He spoke directly to the hills of Judea and Samaria and said that these mountains would be the inheritance of His people. God said, **“I have raised My hand** in an oath that surely the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame”. **“I am for you...” “I will multiply** men upon you”... “Yes, **I will cause** men to walk on you, **My people Israel”**... (Ezekiel 36: 7-12) In other words, God says He is responsible for bringing the Jewish people home to their land. So when some say that the reclaiming of this land by the children of Israel is an accident of history or in the case of this resolution, an illegal occupation, **they are calling God a liar.**

“We may not comprehend the wisdom of God, but we are certain of understanding the will of God.” (4) In other words, we may not understand the holocaust or the perpetual hatred of the Jewish people but we are certain that the results of both have led to the re-birth of and the on-going return to the land of Israel. It is God’s will that His people return to Him. That spiritual return is subsequent to their physical return. In the nations that once fell under Soviet rule the vast majority of Jewish people never had the opportunity to “know” their God. But returning home to Israel He will change all that.

“For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. ...Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken it, and I will do it.” (Ezekiel 36:24-28, 36)

Sadly, many of the churches of the nations have failed to see God’s will in the return of His people back to the land that He **promised** them. The church has not replaced Israel. The church was called to serve the Jewish people and Israel. True followers of the Rabbi from Nazareth must do as He did, **“confirm the promises made to the fathers”**. (Romans 15:8) For example, Ezra International representatives are often the first to inform a Jewish family that they have the right to return to Israel.

Let us not go the way of the world. The “church” was never called to go along to get along.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said *“Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”* Therefore, I must speak-out in protest against resolutions that are complicit with the intentions of enemies of Israel. I believe it is our duty to physically help Jewish people fulfill their destiny, not attempt to thwart them at every turn.

- (1) Abraham Joshua Heschel, Man’s Quest For God, page 57
- (2) Breaking News Israel, Abra Forman, August 15, 2016
- (3) Psalm 119:105
- (4) Abraham Joshua Heschel, Man’s Quest For God, page 136