

Interfaith dialogue – a failure by definition

Non-Orthodox rabbis embrace the progressive ideals of their Christian counterparts, using modern terms for an ancient hatred



The Ordination of Elders in a Scottish Kirk, by John Henry Lorimer, 1891.

by Matthew M. Hausman

In an outrageous display of moral vacancy, the Presbyterian Church (USA) recently labelled Israel an apartheid state –

despite an abundance of evidence and legal precedent to the contrary. Though mainline protestant churches have grown increasingly hostile toward Israel based on false claims of human rights abuses and a disregard for Jewish history, their condemnations are simply modern iterations of the same doctrinal prejudice used to demean Jews and Judaism for two millennia. Their anti-Israel bias is vile but historically consistent, and it raises the issue of how progressive rabbis can sit with liberal activist clergy who promote hoary antisemitic myths wrapped in the language of human rights advocacy.

The International Criminal Court's Rome Statute of 2002 defines apartheid as "an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime." This definition does not fit Israel, where ethnic and religious minorities have equal rights under the law. But it does describe totalitarian states that liberal protestant clergy are reluctant to criticize, including communist dictatorships like China and repressive Islamist regimes like Iran. It could also describe the terrorist organizations many of them legitimize, including Hamas and Hezbollah, which openly call for jihad, genocide, and death to Israel.

Their collective hypocrisy was perhaps best exemplified in 2020 by the "Faith Statement on Escalating Violence with Iran," which condemned "the United States' dangerous aggression towards Iran...", despite that nation's malevolent record of exporting terrorism, persecuting minorities, and seeking to annihilate the Jewish People.

The Presbyterians' false claim of Israeli apartheid should hardly be surprising given Christendom's inveterate record of denigrating and persecuting Jews since before the days of Constantine, its complicity in the Holocaust, and its ambivalence regarding the Jewish State since 1948. In fact,

the Catholic Church would not establish full diplomatic relations with Israel until after the ill-conceived 1993 Oslo Accords, nearly thirty years after Nostra Aetate (“Vatican II”) in 1965 – despite the Jews’ irrefutable historical claims and indigeneity in their homeland.

Jewish sovereignty poses a theological dilemma for those who believe the Jews were exiled..

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