

# Comments On The Levant

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Responding to an inquiry:

When I was at the Union Theological Seminary, New York City, 1965 to 1969, I participated with UTS/JTS (Jewish Theological Seminary) faculty and students who were colloquial-izing the aftermath of the June War of 1967. Abraham Heschel, who was a personal friend and teacher for both semesters of my Junior (i.e., first) year at Union and a famous "dove" on Vietnam, being in deep trouble with his colleagues at JTS for that, as Bill Coffin was at Yale, had pronounced the Israeli achievement typologically identical with God's at Creation. He spoke for a considerable body of opinion, not alone Jewish, which viewed the thing so. Our UTS/JTS discussions, planned for theological examinations, were adjourned after one meeting because there was no room for discussion, not even of priuses. I never forgot the point.

Your *précis* of modern materials on the situation illustrates what is apparent also on the ground, that since the late 1960s no room for discussion has been found and that the only solution to the enmity of the parties is annihilation of the capacity for belligerence of one party or the another. When diplomacy fails, as it can only do here, resort to the crucible of war is indicated, to test the will of God regarding an outcome and to atone the enmity which has caused irredeemable disorder.

The issue in the Eastern Mediterranean countries is water. There is no question of religion, as there is no question of religion in any conflict. Religions are peaceful. So when discord is afoot, some reason other than

religion must be adduced to characterize its origin. <sup>1</sup> Greed for water is the root of the conflict among the Eastern Mediterranean nations. The Golan Heights, for example, while desirable but not essential militarily, is essential for the one thing a desert folk cannot do without more than three hours: water.

The "Iron Wall" policy and Zionism in general are 19th Century mind-sets that are necessary and must remain inflexible given the juncture of the Zionists' goals of (1) colonization and (2) non-assimilation with the availability of water. The Jewish population that was envisioned cannot coexist with an unassimilated population. There isn't enough water for both. Israeli policy has not changed over the years, and cannot, given the goals of Zionism and the availability of water.

It were convenient had the existing inhabitants been gracious enough to pack off. However, they were otherwise inclined because they knew the Balfour Declaration -- which your notes do not mention by name and which was one of the two conflicting aspects of British policy you do mention, the other being Royal Army attitude, which was anti-imperialistic, as most Armies' policy usually is -- was not the unified will of the Allied Powers following WWI or WWII and therefore could be opposed, as indeed has happened.

Israel cannot bring down or even relax the Iron Wall in view of the terms of Zionism and the sources of water. Palestinians do not have to quit the area because support for Zionism in the chancelleries of the world is anything but unanimous. Nor is it enthusiastic.

So, as a theologian with 30+ years of pondering this situation, I am comfortable saying that the sword is the only means for settling the discord in the Eastern Mediterranean, as, unhappily, it has been on numerous

occasions there, for reasons enumerated by the Prophets. If that estimate is wrong -- and it could be -- it will be so because of the Bah'ai presence in Haifa and not for any reason that emerges from the conflicted parties.

Zionism is not the solution to Jewish survival that its founders and adherents say it is. If anything, it is a road to yet another Holocaust, as Versailles was to yet another War. Moshe Menhuin pointed this out decades ago and his son's concert career took a dive accordingly, eventually recovering. Even a lawyer could aver that solutions are not made in the midst of making problems. Solutions are made in the midst of making solutions. Zionism, as popularly defined -- just as "Protestantism" and "Catholicism" in Ireland and elsewhere and, increasingly, "Islam" all over the world -- is a recipe for conflict, not for Jeru-Salem (My God is the Sun/Peace). The facts speak for themselves.

This AIPAC is not the powerful thing it seems to claim to be. Were it, I would not be here to be writing this. Men get impressed with men's abilities when they should not. Tyranny rests on terror, not on truth, and so its legs are, as the Prophet says, "a broken reed." Anyone can pull down their pants and show off the size of their penis, or talk cold and forbidding to "fright the souls of fearful adversaries." Only the human can cause tears to well in the eyes from a demonstration of the incomparable power of compassion.

Bonhoeffer was pleaded by everyone at Union not to return the last time ... everyone excepting Paul Lehmann, my Systematics Professor. Even Niebuhr, the so-called great "social justice" man, wanted Bonhoeffer to shirk his duty. Lehmann alone penetrated to the essence of the matter and gave Dieterich his blessing as he departed the seminary to fulfill his part in the goal to assassinate a tyrant.

Ever since that day, there has been no justification for clergy of any religion to be earning a living as clergy. The prius of society changed in that

moment, no longer supporting a caste structure but now supporting a casteless one. This was a sea change. None now is justified in calling himself a Christian, a Jew, a Moslem, a Hindu, etc. Those structures are gone as operational equipment for life. They exist as vestiges, occasions of nostalgia. They have no legs, no power to build reality (Greek *ekonomos*, to build up, expand). We should not use them.

Our language must be universal if we would be peaceful. If we do not that freely, the fire of our own penance forces us to it.

Well, next time tell me I should write a book. :-)



Responding to:

"What do you see happening to the non-political vast majority of the Palestinian people who are like spectators on the issues that shape their lives? Do "we" owe them any special consideration?"

Good question. My answer is that we do not owe them any special consideration, nor does the Government of Israel. Were (1) that Government to switch to a policy of assimilation -- in effect overwhelming 2500+ years of wide, though not unanimous, Ashkenazi so-called rabbinic opinion -- and were (2) the Palestinian leadership to accept that policy and join in implementing it, consideration would inhere in the policy switched to and be a non-issue except for the relatively low-level details of implementation best left to the hurly-burly of life, as we do here.

Such a policy switch is not impossible yet remains, as all are aware, remote as an actuality.

The impediment to such a policy switch is the body of so-called rabbis, especially Ashkenazi. This phenomenon is paralleled in Christian and Islamic circles where, likewise, the impediment to peace and prosperity is the body of so-called priests and theologians, especially of the so-called catholic churches (Anglican, Roman, Orthodox) and the so called fundamentalist and revivalist ones. This is not, as you know, the sort of statement that is likely to gain significant credence among our people, much less win friends in the orbits of said so-called clergy and theologians. It's import, frankly, is catastrophic for the so-called religious landscape as we have known it, of all flavors. Nor is it a view I feel compelled to broadcast because the truth of it, and the consequences of that truth's actuality, get the job done willy-nilly.

I am at peace regarding the situation in Levant, the Eastern Mediterranean. The peace process I see in the region is the crucible of war. I am justly not regarded as omniscient, yet, that is my best and fixed opinion as to the only possible and therefore the best method of resolution of the discord in the Eastern Mediterranean. I do not know who would win the war, much less who deserves to win it, and I see no other means than war for atoning the enmity that exists between the parties. Enmity must be atoned, it departs by no other means. I am confident that war will produce peace and do not have a reliable means for predicting who would participate in the conflict or on which side.

A.M.D.G.