The Second Sunday of Advent

The Israeli Nationality Law from a Christian Perspective

[Ed. Note: The “Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People” law defines the State of Israel as the exclusive state of the Jewish people.]

God gave believers two meaningful examples to clarify the need to combine spirituality and practicality: salt and light. By reflecting the light of Christ, we illuminate the way for sinners. Just as salt serves in our daily life, we season the dish through our role in society and in protecting the world from corruption. Thus, our actions should stem from our convictions and with reference to the Holy Book when it comes to laws that have a serious impact on people’s lives, such as the Nationality Law enacted by the Israeli Knesset on July 19 this year.

Some provisions in the Nationality Law affirm features of the state that already existed, like the design of the flag and the national anthem. Other provisions go further by declaring that the right to self-determination in the country is solely for Jews. Another provision demotes the status of Arabic from an official language to a “language with a special status.” Another provision declares that the state will promote Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories. The law makes no mention of the values of equality and democracy.

Israel’s long-term goal is to build an increasing body of law that is discriminatory against Arabs. It is deplorable that those who support this and other racist laws are Jews and Christians who interpret the Old Testament texts to affirm the “right of Jews” to the land. Many Christians espouse a heretical interpretation of “the last days/end of time,” which in turn supports a racist Zionist agenda. They ignore large sections of the Old Testament that support the oppressed, the widow and orphans, in addition to key aspects in the New Testament such as the Sermon on the Mount. They hold a distorted interpretation that undermines the rights and the future of Palestinian Christians and Muslims in the land of Jesus’ birth.

Equality and justice are part of the criteria by which God interacted with the human race from day one until now. We appeal to Christians to oppose exclusionist thought that turns our eternal omnipotent God into a god for one tribe or one people over others. The ethos of the Nationality Law can be opposed by faithful men and women standing together with unrestrained voices. “For freedom Christ has set us free.” (Galatians 5:1)

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Reflect: To what resources do you turn when, serving others and working toward a just world, you get discouraged? To what concrete and practical acts of love and service will your spiritual resources lead and empower you today?

Pray: God, when I don’t have the words to pray, hear my sighs. But let neither my words nor my sighs keep me from rising up to love and serve you by loving and serving others. In the name of the One who in the garden prayed, “Thy will, not mine.” Amen.

Act: If you are not actively participating in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement, learn more about it this week (www.bdsmovement.net). If you are participating, share the reasons for your BDS passion with a friend.