

theological justification for Christians to support actions and policies of the modern state of Israel.

However, in the very first chapter, Hagee delivers a diatribe against the policy of the current Israeli government with regard to giving up occupied territory in an effort to achieve a settlement with the Palestinians. Hagee is well known for his opposition to this Israeli policy and has been criticized for this by Israeli and American Jews.

A more accurate title for this book would be "In Opposition to Israel and In Support of the Fulfillment of John Hagee's Armageddon Prophecies, Even If Millions of Jews Have to Die."

Hagee never explains just what it means to "support Israel," but by his example, he indicates that it is okay for the Christian Zionist to oppose any policies and actions of Israel that do not fit into Hagee's end-times prophecy scenarios. Logically, this means that we are not under an obligation to blindly render unconditional support to Israel at all times.

We are all free to support Israel when we believe that Israel is right, and to withhold such support when we believe that Israel is wrong. Hagee does not explicitly say this anywhere, but it is a logical deduction based on his own example of vociferously opposing policies of Israel that he does not like, while bragging of his "support for Israel."

We Have a Duty to Help Our Jewish Brethren

Hagee (p. 7) justifies our support for Israel using Matthew 25:40, saying that the Greek word for "brothers" in that verse refers to "relatives according to the flesh," that is, to Jews.

I was not able to substantiate this interpretation by Hagee. The Greek word here is adelphos, and a quick check of Strong's Concordance will reveal that the Apostle Paul routinely used the same word to address the predominantly Gentile congregations at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, etc. In Philippians 2:25 Paul refers to Epaphroditus as his adelphos. Was Epaphroditus, named after the heathen Greek goddess Aphrodite/Venus, a Jew? I hardly think so.

BOOK REVIEW "In Defense of Israel" by John Hagee

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The full title of this book is "In Defense of Israel - The Bible's Mandate for Supporting the Jewish State." This creates the impression that Hagee will provide a Bible-based

Hagee's interpretation of Matthew 25:40 as referring only to ethnic Jews appears to be without etymological or exegetical justification. Of course we agree with Hagee that we should do nice things for Jews and defend them from persecution. But what does this have to do with "opposing policies of the Israeli government that John Hagee does not like because they do not fit his Armageddon scenarios of war and mass killing of Jews?" There is a logical disconnect here.

Hagee has only one other proof-text for supporting Israel (p. 4): "Speaking of the Jewish people, the Word of God says, 'I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you.' (Genesis 12:3)" But this promise is not addressed to "the Jewish people" - it is addressed only to Abraham, using grammar intended for a singular subject. If we spiritualize this to include all of Abraham's literal descendants, we would have to include the Arabs as well as the Jews under this blessing. There is no exegetical basis for applying this promise to a portion of Abraham's descendants 4000 years later (Israeli Jews) while excluding his other descendants (Palestinians and other Arabs).

We Must Attack Iran In Order To Protect Israel

Hagee (p. 6) says "Another Persian - Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran - is plotting to exterminate the Jewish people. His goal is to put together the capability for a nuclear holocaust." Hagee provides no evidence to support these statements. Representatives of the Jewish community now living in Iran have stated that they are not in danger and do not wish to emigrate from Iran.

Meanwhile, 16 American intelligence agencies have stated that Iran has no program to develop nuclear weapons. Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, issued a religious edict in 2005 forbidding the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons. Perhaps Hagee was not aware of these facts when he wrote this book.

On page 79 Hagee says "If there is any doubt that the president of

Iran is committed to the destruction of Israel, we should simply hear his own words." But Hagee fails to quote, anywhere in this book, any statement by the president of Iran threatening to destroy Israel. Hagee wants to conduct an unprovoked attack against Iran, on behalf of Israel, but he fails to make the case that Iran poses any threat to Israel or to Jews anywhere. Hagee would have us go to war based on the same types of falsehood and misinformation that got us into our current endless, unwinnable war in Iraq.

Nowhere in this book does Hagee consider the real possibility that an American attack on Iran would make things much worse for Israel, by plunging the entire region into all-out war. It wouldn't matter to the fatalistic Hagee, because he says on p. 173 that "When I speak about a coming conflict or worldwide war, it is something that has been predicted by the prophets of Israel for thousands of years. Now these ancient prophecies are becoming reality. . . . These prophecies are going to happen exactly as described in Scripture because their source is God Almighty." (Lots of people in the Middle East have to die, and there is nothing we can do to stop it, so why bother trying?)

Hagee denies accusations that "my intent is to ignite World War III and kick-start the Apocalypse. It's absolutely untrue." Well, that's certainly a relief. If thousands of Israelis are killed in Hagee's war, it won't be Hagee's fault, even though he lobbied for that war. Hagee, in this book and in many other places, has demanded that America start a war that may result in the death of millions, but Hagee will be absolved of blame because it was God's will that all those people die anyway.

The Crusades Were Evil

Hagee (p. 21) sees the Crusades, which were ordered by the Pope in 1096, as totally evil and an expression of "Christian" (actually Catholic) anti-Semitism. He says, "The Crusaders were not holy men on a holy mission. They were a mismatched and misled mob of thieves, murderers, and

rapists who believed their sins had been forgiven in advance by the pope."

I agree with Hagee's assessment of the Crusades. The atrocities committed by the Crusaders against Jews, Muslims and non-Catholic Christians were among the worst in the annals of recorded history, and we do ourselves no favors by justifying and identifying ourselves with such monstrous crimes. It should be noted, however, that the anti-Jewish pogroms of the Crusaders were condemned by Bernard of Clairvaux and other Catholic leaders, and that throughout the Middle Ages it was the policy of the Catholic Church to provide sanctuary and protection to Jews when they were subjected to pogroms by ignorant Catholic mobs.

Hagee describes Hitler's Holocaust against the Jews as a logical consequence and expression of institutional anti-Semitism on the part of the Roman Catholic Church. Much as I would like to join Hagee in his Catholic-bashing on this issue, fairness compels us to point out that Pope Pius XII personally saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews during World War II and was thanked by Jewish leaders for doing so.

Nevertheless, the anti-Semitic teachings of the Catholic Church and of Martin Luther do provide a partial explanation for the terrible persecution of Jews during World War II, and Hagee deserves some credit for daring to point out these influences, at the risk of irritating Catholic and Lutheran readers.

Hagee's point is that since nominal Christianity is responsible for modern anti-Semitism, therefore we as Christians should feel the need to make amends by reaching out to the Jews in love. This is a valid point, but not everyone will agree that lobbying for endless wars in the Middle East is the best way to show our love and concern for the Jews.

Who Are the Jews?

Since everything revolves around the Jews, Hagee on p. 47 poses the all-important question, just who are the Jews? And he never really answers that question anywhere in this book.

He lists 5 possible criteria for establishing Jewishness, one of which is "Personal choice/conversion" which means basically that anyone choosing to convert to Judaism, or to call himself a Jew, is a Jew. Hagee never really states his agreement or disagreement with any of the listed criteria. He correctly states that Romans 9-11 deals with "Jews according to the flesh" but never deals with such passages as John 8:39, Romans 2:28-29, Galatians 3:7, 28-29, 6:15-16 and others which teach that not all Jews after the flesh are true Jews, and that Gentile converts to Christianity are part of the true Israel.

Hagee makes no mention of Gentiles being grafted into Israel in Romans 11:17-24, nor of the walls of separation between Jew and Gentile being broken down, Romans 10:12, Acts 15:9, Ephesians 2:11-14.

Hagee notes that Adolf Hitler was possibly 1/4 Jewish but he does not tell us whether such a person with 1/4 Jewish ancestry is to be considered a true Jew. Nor does he clearly state whether or not Gentile converts to Judaism, such as Sammy Davis, Jr., are to be considered true Jews. If there is a spiritual advantage before God in being a Jew, should we all follow the example of Sammy Davis, Jr. and convert to Judaism? You will not find the answer to such questions in this book - Hagee leaves us hanging.

Christians and Jews Worship the Same God

On page 62 Hagee correctly states that "The Allah described in the Quran, the scriptures sacred to Muslims, is not the same as the God of Abraham." But on the same page he errs in saying, "Both Jews and Christians worship the same God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." It is not true that Christians and Jews worship the same God. We worship a Trinitarian God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and Jews do not.

Jesus Was Not the Messiah

In his zeal to vindicate the Jews from the charge of rejecting their Messiah, Hagee departs far from any semblance of orthodox Christianity by

denying that Jesus was the Messiah, saying "It was not the Father's will, nor his, to be Messiah." (p. 138) "The Jews were not rejecting Jesus as Messiah; it was Jesus who was refusing to be the Messiah to the Jews." (p. 140) "The Jews did not reject Jesus as Messiah; it was Jesus who rejected the Jewish desire for him to be their Messiah." (p. 145)

If true, then the Apostle John lied when he said that Jesus told the Woman at the Well that He was indeed the Messiah (John 4:25-26). The same John said in 1 John 2:22, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ [Messiah]? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." Oops, looks like Hagee has made himself a liar and an antichrist, by denying that Jesus was the Christ.

This Book is Not Recommended

"In Defense of Israel" is a bad book, not only because of the blatant false teaching with regard to Jesus not being the Messiah, but also because it provides a faulty basis for going to war with Iran. Hagee fails to provide any factual, military or theological basis for attacking Iran. He does not explain how such an attack would fulfill Bible prophecy. He leaves the impression that such an attack would have the effect of supporting Israel, but he himself openly opposes current policies of the Israeli government.

He ignores any consideration of the blessings that Israeli and Jewish people would experience as a result of peace in the Middle East, insisting instead that there must be devastating wars there in order to fulfill his own personal version of the Armageddon Theology.

Some readers may feel that I am wasting too much time dealing with the errors of John Hagee and that there are more important issues to deal with. Meanwhile, Hagee claims to reach 99 million viewers with his television broadcasts, and has great influence on the foreign policy views of major Republican candidates for President including John McCain.

We do not have the time or ability to warn our people about every false teacher, but Hagee is one of the

most prominent false teachers of our time, who is purveying dangerous principles that could lead to a pointless war in the Middle East with heartbreaking consequences to millions of Jews and Gentiles. We need to inform our people about the errors of John Hagee.