

SUBJECT 1: MISSIONS

DATE: 12.12.78 JOURNAL: "HAMODIYA" (HEBREW A.M. AGUDAT YISRAEL) NEWS REPORT
HEADING: "HIS EMINENCE RABBI OVADIAH YOSEF WARNS AGAINST RENEWAL OF MISSION ACTIVITY:
THE "GURU" & "MEDITATION"--IDOLATRY"

QUOTE : The Chief Rabbi of Israel, His Eminence Rabbi Ovadya Yosef, has come out with a warning against the renewal of the activity of the Mission in Israel, and has again published a warning in the matter. In his remarks His Eminence Rabbi Ovadya Yosef states: "With the intensification of incitements on the part of the various organizations and sects of the Mission, whose sole aim is to ensnare Jews going through a spiritual or economic crisis, and to lead them, Heaven forbid; to conversion, at the same time there have been spreading to our deep sorrow various new sects which are sweeping along with them thousands of innocent Jews into paths which contradict our faith and holy Torah, and there is in it something of idolatry. Is this not what the teaching of "Meditation" and the sect of the "Guru" are, with their offerings of incense and oblations and plain idolatrous adoration?"

His Eminence Yosef warns the general public to take the utmost care not to come into any contact whatsoever with them, nor in any manner whatsoever, and parents are warned with the gravest warning to heed their tender children lest, Heaven forbid, they be taken in by these seducers who mask their doings by enticements of material prosperity, and the like, and in various types of courses and lectures, for this is the way of the evil inclination. "Today he says, 'Do thus,' and tomorrow he says, 'Worship idols'."

It should be noted that the High Court once ruled on the subject of the sects of "Meditation" and "Guru" and decreed that these sects were pure idolatry. The ruling of the High Court was ^{duly} published in the press of the world and Israel. END ARTICLE.

SUBJECT 2: CHRISTIANS IN ISRAEL

DATE: 24.11.78 JOURNAL: THE TIMES, LONDON FEATURE ARTICLE
HEADING: "ISRAEL'S CHRISTIAN CITIZENS: BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN FAITHS"

BYLINE : Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder (He has lived in Israel since 1949, headed Israel's overseas broadcasting service, was editor-in-chief ENCYCLOPEDIA JUDAICA, is on staff of Hebrew Univ. Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Chairman Jerusalem Interfaith Rain-

QUOTE : Most Christians--and Muslims--living in Israel encounter no bow Group.) problems in observing their religion. Freedom of worship is a fundamental tenet of the country's Decl. of Indep. and is administered thro' the Min. of Relig., which has special depts. for the Christian, Muslim & Druze communities....Israel's Christian population reflects the spectrum of the world's churches, comprising both the Eastern and Western churches. In the entire Holy Land today there are 120,000 Christians, 2 1/2% of the total population. In Israel almost all Christians belong to the Eastern churches, the largest being the Greek Orthodox with 42,000 adherents, a similar number Eastern Catholic churches, the Roman Catholic Church 28,000. By far the smallest are the Protestant churches, historical latecomers on the scene and fragmented into many tiny groups, the largest the Anglican with 2200 followers.

Dissatisfaction over Israel's attitude to Christians that have recently been voiced emanate mainly from Western churchmen, especially from among Protestant ~~groups~~ groups. The main area of conflict is connected with active Christian proselytizing. This can be fully understood only against the background of the trauma of Jews of European origin, resulting from many centuries of religious persecution in Christian countries. The pogrom was a frequent experience, often associated with the celebration of a Christian holiday, the hostility of the Christian world was constant and what amounted to forced baptism was not uncommon.

The Christian missionary--often using questionable methods--was a figure that struck fear into Jewish communities. Sensitivities became even sharper after 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust. Every individual survivor was precious the more so as some of those who were saved, mostly baptized children, under Christian care, were lost to their people. Such anxieties do not prevail among most of Israel's Jews, who come from Muslim lands and have never encountered such activity. It is not found among Jews from the West who have had the opportunity of experiencing an enlightened Christianity unknown in Eastern Europe, as well as the new ecumenical understanding of recent years. But it remains strong among a very small section--mostly extremely zealous in their religious attitudes. It is members of this group who have been responsible for occasional illegal harassment of proselytizing groups--and who, when caught, have been punished. The same group has committed equally fanatical acts against Reform and secular Jews. This group is a mainstay of the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Israel Party, which has recently succeeded in pushing through the Knesset a bill which made it an offence to offer money or other benefit to a person in order to change his religion. The bill as it stands is unexceptionable. It is directed against bribery, and is not restricted, as has been misreported, to

MORE

SELECTIONS No. 47 (to 12.12.78)

obtaining converts from Judaism, but applies to material enticement to forsake any religion. However, its sponsors made it clear that the bill was directed against Christian missionary activity. They would have wished to make this point more explicit, but it was obvious that most members of the Knesset would not have gone along with them. The fact that it got through at all was a result of internal political considerations--it was part of the price paid by the coalition Govt for Agudat Israel support on other matters.

The passing of the bill caused widespread concern among both Jews and Christians in Israel. Reservations were felt, not so much over the wording of the new law, but concerning possible abuse in its application. In reply to Christian leaders the Min. of Justice wrote: "Over the years we have striven to create mutual trust between the different religious communities in Israel. There is no intention whatsoever on the part of the Israeli Govt to restrict in any way the religious freedom of the Christian community or impede them in the pursuit of normal educational or philanthropic activities. Any faith or belief should be a matter of free personal consideration and choice but any attempt to buy souls by means of material inducements is incompatible with elementary human and religious principles. Needless to say, the law applies equally to all religions."

The Attorney-General promised in writing that he would personally examine any instance in which the law was invoked. Almost a year has passed, and this has not been necessary.

One of the most hopeful signs in Israel has been the quality of the Christian-Jewish dialogue. The country's Muslims are Arabs and so--with a handful of exceptions--are the Christians. Religious dialogue, not surprisingly, tends to spill over into political issues. Nevertheless, within the given limits, there is a depth, directness, and frankness which promises to provide an example for such dialogues the world over. The Israel Interfaith Committee, and other interfaith institutions are active and effective. They use their influence quietly in times of difficulties, some of which, one is sorry to record, are brought about by a tiny minority of Christians who seek to discredit Israel's Government and people. A much larger minority seek to build a bridge towards the Jewish people. There are many Jews, too, who encourage and take part in this work of reconciliation.

END ARTICLE.

DATE: 16.11.78 JOURNAL: "HAARETZ" (HEBREW INDEPENDENT A.M.) LETTER TO EDITOR

HEADING: "WHAT DID JESUS SAY?"

BY : YIGAL YADIN, JERUSALEM (SEE SELECTIONS No. 46, page 2 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE)

QUOTE : I did not see the article in HAARETZ to which Mr. Sabah Farid (HAARETZ 9.11) refers, but I did not make the remark that was attributed to me in the article.

In my lecture I said that the words of Jesus, "I SAY UNTO YOU: LOVE YOUR ENEMIES," which come in opposition to those who say that one is to hate one's enemies, may now be understood in respect of the belief of the Essenes. In the writings of this sect the sectarians are indeed commanded to hate their enemies. From this, one may conclude that the remarks of Jesus were made in opposition to the beliefs of the Essenes.

END LETTER

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