

THE PRESBYTERIAN DIVESTITURE VOTE AND THE JEWISH RESPONSE

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I don't want the money that pays my pension and medical benefits to be invested in companies that profit from bulldozers that demolish Palestinian homes or are building parts of the wall.

Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk, PC(USA)¹

In June 2004, the Presbyterian General Assembly voted to initiate a process that could lead to a divestiture of stock from companies that supported or profited from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. The vote was overwhelming, 431-62, or 87 percent. It was unlikely that such a divestiture would have much of an economic impact upon either the \$8 billion Presbyterian Endowment and Retirement Portfolios or on the companies that might be affected (or on Israel for that matter), but from a political perspective the vote was an unexpected bombshell. It was a statement by an organization rooted in an ethical theology that they found the situation in the occupied territories unacceptable and at the very least did not want to profit from it. Because Israel had always claimed the moral high ground in its struggle with the Palestinians, the vote represented a powerful ethical challenge. The Jewish leadership in the United States was stunned by the decision, the first by any major religious body to divest. The Presbyterians (2.4 million members) were also stunned by the

intensity of the Jewish reaction. The controversy leaves us with three major questions: Why did this vote occur? Why was the reaction as intense as it was? Will the decision have any long-term impact, and, if so, what?

The Presbyterian Church has long been involved in the Arab world. Over a century ago, it sent educators into the region who founded the American University of Beirut and the American University in Cairo. The denomination has supported an Israeli-Palestinian settlement based on land for peace (Jewish and Palestinian states) and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland or be compensated, the Right of Return. Presbyterians have denounced antisemitism and violence against Jewish and Palestinian civilians (terrorism, if you will).

Jewish-Presbyterian relations have been strained for some time. During the years of Begin-Shamir leadership in the 1970s and 1980s, when Israeli settlements expanded and Israel twice invaded Lebanon (1978 and 1982), the Presbyterians became increasingly critical. From 1977

on, the denomination adopted resolutions in 18 of the next 25 years that questioned Israeli actions or advocated Palestinian rights or suggested changes in American policies. In 1982, the Presbyterians criticized the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and called upon Israel “to withdraw all of its forces from Lebanon immediately [and] upon the Palestine Liberation Organization to cease acts of violence against its neighbor, [and] upon the United States government to enter into official contact with the Palestine Liberation Organization at such time as that organization acknowledges the right of Israel to exist within secure and recognized boundaries.” In 1983, they called upon the United States to deny “all forms of aid to Israel as long as that nation persists in creating new West Bank settlements.” In 1984, 1986 and 1987, they called for the United States to recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. In 1988, they passed a broad-ranging resolution calling upon Israel to “cease the systematic violation of the human rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Specifically, we call for an end to the policies and (or) practices of administrative detention, collective punishment, the torture of prisoners and suspects, and the deportation of dissidents.” Several resolutions called for the United States to leverage its aid to change Israeli policies, and as early as 1984, they were calling for an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, long before Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres won Nobel peace prizes for moving in similar directions.

While consistently affirming Israel’s right to exist in peace and security, these resolutions were seen by many Jewish leaders as systematically unfriendly. The

Presbyterians thought they were advocating balanced policies that would maximize the chances of peace for both Israelis and Palestinians but, from a Jewish perspective, they were choosing sides under the guise of a charade of evenhandedness. Relations were strained even more on the domestic front in 2003, when the Philadelphia Presbytery (using some denominational monies) created a “messianic” congregation that tried to blend Hebrew culture and identity with Christian faith. Even though Presbyterians had affirmed the integrity of the Jewish faith and had disassociated themselves from so-called ‘supercessionist’ theology — the belief that the Church had replaced the Hebrew covenant and that redemption for Jews would come through conversion — many Jews saw the very existence of this congregation as derogatory or even threatening.² In a separate incident, a Presbyterian delegation visiting Lebanon had met with a Hezbollah-related sheikh. One of the delegation, retired Pittsburgh Theological Seminary ethics professor Ron Stone, said the meeting was “a lot easier than dealings and dialogue with Jewish leaders.”³ Although two Presbyterian officials were terminated over the flap, there was still smoldering resentment from Jewish leaders.⁴ In June 2004, when the church entered the divestiture debate, most saw it as a predictable escalation. In fact, the vote reflected a profound and growing concern about Israeli policy and the violence flowing out of the conflict.

To understand the vote, it is important to understand how the Presbyterians make a decision. It is not done by a small band of individuals in the national office in Louisville but involves the whole of the Presbyterian governing structure. The

Presbyterian polity resembles a loose federal system. At the local level are 11,000 congregations governed by sessions, bodies of lay elders and ministers. Each session sends representatives (a mix of elders and ministers) to a regional body called a presbytery. Each of these 173 presbyteries then chooses “commissioners” to attend the national biannual meeting called the General Assembly. The General Assembly has two major officers, a professional stated clerk, who handles polity issues and speaks for the denomination, and a moderator who serves for two years and interacts mostly with the congregations. As anyone who knows organizational behavior would guess, commissioners are highly dedicated, involved and committed to the organization and its principles. This means that there is an inevitable disconnect between those in the pews and those who adopt resolutions at higher levels. This became a factor later on.

Any presbytery can propose to the General Assembly a call for action, an overture in Presbyterian terminology. Typically there are scores of overtures addressing a host of social, political and international issues. Because the church is very complex in its makeup, the culture of the denomination is to respect the specialized concerns and expertise of others. While controversial resolutions are often sidelined, many pass without serious dissent or without a broad base of support or even awareness among the wider membership.⁵ In one sense, overtures are efforts by the denomination to identify its direction and its social concerns within light of its theology. Prior to the national meeting, overtures are reviewed by a committee for clarity, overlap with other overtures, and consistency with existing

policy. Affected or interested groups can offer opinions or suggestions. The overture on divestiture came out of Florida’s St. Augustine Presbytery and called for blanket divestiture from all companies investing more than \$1 million in Israel or receiving \$1 million in annual profits from such investments. The committee modified that resolution in favor of the phased, selective approach that would give them more leverage to negotiate with the companies.⁶ It also changed the resolution to emphasize the occupation rather than Israel itself. The Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) committee, charged with implementing the decision, asked that it be sent to them as a recommendation so they would have more discretion in handling it, but the committee sent it by a vote of 68-0 to the floor for a formal vote.⁷

To a human-rights activist, the issues were clear: home demolitions, detentions, check points, identity cards, land confiscation, uprooting of trees, and a pervasive military presence. But religious leaders see things differently. One person in the St. Augustine presbytery said a key focus of concern was getting the negotiation process restarted. But there was a deeper goal:

The purpose of the divestment action is not punitive or vindictive and not directed at Israel at all. We thought it was an issue of moral consistency in which the intended beneficiary is the church itself. For 30 years, we have been calling for fair treatment of the Palestinians and an end of the occupation and yet we had investments in companies that profit from that situation and its attendant violence. We believe that the church

is in a stronger moral position to articulate the call for peace and negotiation if we do not profit by our investments from the things we decry with our theology. The simple truth is that neither the corporations who do business in Israel nor the government of Israel itself will notice any meaningful economic impact from the loss of Presbyterian investments. But perhaps the world will notice that there is a group of Christians willing to accept some level of corporate sacrifice in the interests of peace in this tormented region.

Following debate, the General Assembly adopted a series of resolutions that changed the dynamic of Jewish-Presbyterian relations.⁸ One resolution criticized Israel's security barrier, its so-called fence or wall, for penetrating Palestinian territory. Another criticized Christian Zionism, declaring that it incorrectly interprets Biblical texts to put today's Israel too near to the heart of Christian theology.⁹ The third charged the MRTI committee to generate a list of companies operating in Israel to be targeted for a "phased selective divestment" from its retirement and endowment funds. The MRTI committee had operated for 28 years, since 1976, when the General Assembly declared divestment an ethical form of Christian witness. It had coordinated divestitures from companies involved in gambling, tobacco, environmental damage and violent video games, as well as from companies operating in Sudan, South Africa, Nigeria and Central America. Its 2005 annual report listed 19 companies. It is particularly alert to military issues and cases where vulnerable people are at risk. One of its great successes was to help persuade Caterpillar to stop modifying trucks for use

by the South African military. As recently as 2001, it divested from Talisman Energy, a Canadian oil company operating in Sudan. When Talisman pulled out of Sudan, it was restored to the Presbyterian portfolio.

THE DIVESTITURE MOVEMENT

One target of contemporary divestiture advocates was the Caterpillar Corporation, which makes 64-ton D-9 easily-armored bulldozers. From September 2000 until November 2004, Israel leveled 4,100 Palestinian homes, causing great suffering (Haaretz, 2004). On March 16, 2003, Rachel Corrie, a student from Evergreen College in Washington and affiliated with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), put herself at risk by standing between an Israeli bulldozer and a Palestinian home in Rafa, Gaza, where Israel had been systematically leveling homes to create an empty zone. The bulldozer ran over her and killed her. A host of internet sites tell her story, including her last letter to her parents. A photograph published in *The New York Times* and elsewhere showed Corrie standing boldly in front of the house, facing an advancing bulldozer. Almost overnight, she became a symbol of principled resistance for those monitoring human-rights issues.¹⁰

The International Solidarity Movement was formed in 2001 as a support group for those under occupation. Two key personalities were Huwaida Arref, a Christian Palestinian Israeli from the Detroit area, and her Jewish fiancé, Adam Shapiro. Shapiro received considerable attention in March 2002, when he was delivering medical supplies to Ramallah and was trapped by an Israeli lockdown, and ended up having breakfast with Yasser Arafat.

His parents, who live in New York City, received so many threats they had to evacuate their home. Arref says that the ISM requires only two things of its supporters: to believe the Palestinians have the right to freedom as expressed in international law and all relevant UN resolutions and to use only non-violent means to resist the occupation (personal interview). Once it got started, the ISM was run entirely by Palestinians on the ground. The Palestine Solidarity Movement (PSM), a distinct but parallel organization, was run by Americans in the United States and was active in organizing a campus-based divestiture campaign. William Youmans of Michigan was a key personality in the PSM.

These movements revived two techniques associated with the 1970s and 1980s, divestiture and solidarity.¹¹ The earlier divestiture movement focused on getting churches and universities to sell their stock in companies operating in South Africa. It operated in tandem with (and sometimes at cross-purposes to) other movements such as the academic boycott of South African universities and the effort to get corporations to provide better working conditions for their black workers, the so-called Sullivan Principles. These principles called for fair employment practices, strategies of promotion, and other changes by American companies operating in South Africa. There was also a separate disinvestment movement that called for companies to sell off or close down their operations in South Africa. All of these movements were private and were distinct from governmental trade sanctions or export-import restrictions.

The solidarity-type movement of the 1980s focused upon the oligarchic regimes of Central America and the death squads

that often conducted massacres of peasants. The logic of the movement (Catholic-based and called Witness for Peace) was that individuals would volunteer to put themselves in harm's way to protect innocent people, what the ISM calls "protective accompaniment." To be blunt, they knew that when Americans were present, peasants were less likely to be massacred. The ISM began to put their members in places where the Israeli occupation was particularly heavy. One of those persons-in-place was Rachel Corrie.¹²

The ISM, like PSM's divestiture movement, had as major goals popular mobilization and public education. The PSM began an annual conference to discuss the situation in the Palestinian territories and to support divestiture. They encountered enormous resistance from groups supporting Israel. The universities where they met came under exceptional pressure. They were deluged with allegations that the movement was antisemitic, endorsed terrorism, and called for the elimination of the Jewish state. In a speech that received national attention, President Lawrence Summers of Harvard said of those students and faculty on his campus who endorsed divestiture, "Serious and thoughtful people are advocating and taking actions that are antisemitic in their effect if not their intent." His logic appears to parallel that of the South African Terrorism Act of 1967, which included within its definition actions that could "cause substantial financial loss" to the economy.¹³ Summers also expressed concern about a coming *Kristallnacht* (government-instigated massacres and expulsions of Jews).¹⁴

THE ACTUAL RESOLUTION

The wording of the Presbyterian resolution called for “a just and equitable solution” to the conflict, rooted in “international law, human rights, the sanctity of life and dignity of persons, land property, safety of home, freedom of movement, the rights of refugees to return to their homeland, the right of people to determine their political future, and to live in peace and prosperity.” It called upon the United States to be “an honest, even-handed broker for peace,” endorsed the four-party diplomatic “Quartet,” and referred to the Geneva accord negotiating plan as “a useful and practical approach” to a settlement. It called for direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and supported the idea of an international force to stabilize the region. It said, “The occupation must end; it has proven to be at the root of evil acts committed against innocent people on both sides of the conflict.” It declared that “horrific acts of violence and deadly attacks on innocent people, whether carried out by Palestinian ‘suicide bombers’ or by the Israeli military are abhorrent and inexcusable by all measures, and are a dead-end alternative to a negotiated settlement of the conflict.” This latter phrasing echoed a 2002 statement by Stated Clerk Reverend Clifton Kirkpatrick that defined the denomination’s position on the spiraling violence of that year: “We grieve the loss of innocent lives of Israeli civilians killed by suicide bombings and condemn those acts as abhorrent. We do not believe that acts of violence will ultimately create a climate in which Israelis and Palestinians can live together in security. We decry the continuing occupation of the Palestinian territories by the Israeli government, and the terror inflicted

upon the Palestinian people through Israel’s repeated military incursions into Palestinian towns and villages. We do not believe that the might of the powerful can bring peace through the force of humiliation, violated rights and death.” MRTI was instructed “to initiate a process of phased selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel... and to make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly Council for action.”

In July, swirling in controversy, Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick issued a pastoral letter defining the positions of the denomination.¹⁵ He said the denomination had “consistently supported the existence of Israel within legitimate and secure borders and prayed for its security and well being. It is, however, the conviction of the Presbyterian Church (USA) that “the security of Israel and the Israeli people is inexorably dependent on making peace with their Palestinian neighbors, by negotiating and reaching a just and equitable solution to the conflict.”” Regarding allegations that the church had singled out Israel, Kirkpatrick noted that the denomination “regularly published an annual report regarding human rights around the world, and has spoken specifically about issues of justice related to North and South Korea, Rwanda, Taiwan, Central American states and many others, including the United States.” Regarding violence and whether the church had soft-pedaled attacks on Jews, he reaffirmed the previous position of the denomination: “Acts of hate and terror inflicted on innocent children and youth, women and men of Israel and the larger Jewish community must be unequivocally condemned and vehemently abhorred. This is in no way inconsistent with speaking out about the political and

military violence of the Israeli government or the militant activities of Israeli settlers.”

THE JEWISH REACTION

Jewish reaction to the resolution was almost entirely negative. Jewish observers used terms such as “outraged” and “incensed.” Some used inflammatory words or misstated — intentionally or not one cannot tell — what the resolution actually said. Some of the rhetoric was excessive and bordered on reflexive paranoia. Presbyterians described these more intemperate responses in terms that ranged from “hyperbole that makes it so hard to have a productive conversation”¹⁶ to “vilification.”¹⁷

A few Jewish peace advocates praised the Presbyterian vote. Jewish Voices for Peace “expressed its support” for the divestiture decision and said “economic pressure is crucial to getting Israel to make the necessary compromises for peace.” They added that Presbyterians have been “unwavering” in support for Israeli Jews and that “The best way for Christians to be allies to Jews is to help bring about an end to the occupation.”¹⁸

But that was not the norm among the Jewish leadership. Some critics saw the vote as threatening the very economic survival of Israel itself. James Rudin, senior interreligious adviser at the American Jewish Committee, said, “Up to now it’s been: Cut off aid, Israel should stop building settlements — It’s verbal. This is the first one that I know of that a resolution coming out of a church body has talked about divestment. We’re talking about money. This one’s really got teeth. It has a chilling effect.” Rudin said the vote represented “a real threat to the economic life and security of Israel.”¹⁹ Rabbi Ira

Youdovin of the Chicago Board of Rabbis wrote that it was a “declaration of economic warfare against the state of Israel.”²⁰ Some critics were concerned about the so-called “even-handed” style of the wording, asserting that the issues could not be treated in such a simplistic way. Others were distressed that Israel was being treated as the ‘moral equivalent’ of its opponents. They were particularly incensed that suicide attacks and Israeli military strikes were renounced in the same sentence with no distinction as to motive or goal. And using the word “terror” in 2002 to describe Israeli actions but not Palestinian actions was like waving a red flag at a bull. Many Jews believe that Israel was founded upon high moral principles and is facing enemies who are fundamentally opposed to those principles. To suggest that Israel, in its response to its situation or its effort to defend itself, is somehow comparable either to its enemies or to other controversial states (South Africa comes to mind) is not only wrong but reflects a profound hostility. Not a few saw lurking within the bland phrasing of the resolutions a systematic anti-Israeli or even antisemitic spirit.²¹ Four texts illustrate the intensity of feeling.

First, Alan Dershowitz of Harvard University wrote an op-ed piece in the *Los Angeles Times* saying the church had committed a “moral sin” and calling the resolution “immoral, sinful and bigoted.” It would allegedly create a “blacklist” of all corporations making or investing \$1 million a year in Israel and would “divest from any company on the list,” exempting only those dealing in education, social welfare or construction. “The Presbyterian resolution effectively calls for the end of Israel” by endorsing the right of refugees to return to

Palestine or be compensated, therefore “turning Israel from a Jewish state into another state with a Palestinian majority.” The resolution “encourages the continued use of terrorism by Palestinian leaders.” He called for “grassroots Presbyterians” to “overthrow and prune the rotten branches.”²²

The Anti-Defamation League issued a statement on August 26, 2004, calling the divestiture resolution “offensive and distressing.” It said that “to assert that there is a moral equivalency between the racist policy of apartheid and the efforts to protect the citizenry of Israel is unconscionable. To further suggest that the same technique used to break the racist policies of apartheid, that of divestiture, be employed against those doing business with Israel is to support that inaccurate and unjust moral equivalency.” Later, ADL Director Abraham Foxman challenged a Presbyterian official who attended an ADL meeting: “What galls us is that it’s based in morality. You wrap it in the moral ‘Truth’ and it’s moral hypocrisy. Where is your divestment of Arab states who refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish people? Where is your sanctioning of the corporations who support them? Are you talking to those who have the materials for suicide bomb chemicals — are they on your list?”²³

A widely read religious position was by Rabbi Ira Youdovin, the executive vice president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis.²⁴ He said the resolution constituted a “declaration of economic warfare against the state of Israel.” The word “evil,” as in the phrase that the occupation was “at the root of evil acts committed against innocent people” referred only to Israeli deeds and meant that “no Palestinian action, no matter how horrific, is categorized as evil.”

The rabbi noted that the resolution did not use the word “terrorism” to describe suicide bombings, “But if blowing up Israeli children on a Tel Aviv bus is not an evil act and a terrorist act, then what is it?” He said the Presbyterians had a long-standing “two-pronged strategy of demonizing Israel while whitewashing Palestinian terrorism, . . . laying the groundwork for imposing divestment.” Referring to a background Historical Synopsis the church developed for study groups and put on its website, he said “anti-Israeli forces” had set about to “fabricate a narrative in which Israel is the sole evildoer and the Palestinians are innocent victims.”²⁵ He suggested that the church had “become an apologist for demented killers who strap explosives to their bodies and go off to murder innocent men, women and children on school buses or in pizza parlors, or who are gathered for a Passover seder.” Speaking from a “personal perspective,” Youdovin said the Historical Synopsis focused upon political events in Europe as the driving force that created Zionism and ignored “the centrality of the land of Israel and Jerusalem to Jewish hopes, prayers and religious observance for millennia....” This is the logic, he said, by which Yassir Arafat denied “Jewish historical claims to the Temple Mount.” The occupation is “being used to excuse the reawakening of demons” and ignores “homicidal ideologies” among the Palestinians. Finally, he said, the Presbyterians “ignore the incontrovertible fact that this catastrophe is the product of many causes and that there is guilt enough to share between all parties. People of conscience must act in awareness that the singling out, magnifying and sanctifying of Jewish sins has always been at the core of the terrible evil that we know

as anti-Semitism. Failing in this awareness, you cross a line that people of good conscience dare not cross.”

In September 2004, Congressman Howard Berman (D-Ca) wrote an open letter (signed by 13 other members of Congress) calling the resolution “irresponsible, counterproductive, and morally bankrupt.”²⁶ It said “Palestinians and their extremist allies continue to seek the destruction of Israel,” which has a “fundamental obligation” to “provide security for the Israeli people.” Divestiture would penalize Israel “for acting in its own self-defense” and would “provide encouragement for those that seek to delegitimize the very existence of the Jewish state.” The letter endorsed the “security fence,” saying it will “provide real physical security” and “create the conditions necessary for a two-state solution in which the legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians can be satisfied.” A parallel letter to the Commerce Department called for economic sanctions, urging the Department to “investigate the national boycott campaign against Israel, shut down the illegal divestment campaigns and impose the appropriate penalties.”²⁷ It is noteworthy that both parties, through their whips, signed this intimidating and threatening appeal for legal action. The Zionist Organization of America claimed credit for drafting the letter.

THE JEWISH STRATEGY

Almost immediately Jewish groups began to organize to prevent what the Jewish weekly *Forward* described as a “potential domino effect” from the vote. They seemed to have three strategies. One was to open up dialogue with Presbyterians and others to explain their concerns and try to modify the resolution. Stated Clerk

Kirkpatrick had called for Presbyterians to “maintain their relationships with people of other faiths, with sensitivity to the fragility of trust in the present climate of violence and terror.”²⁸ While some Jewish leaders were contemptuous and polemical in their approach (and almost all were skeptical), others engaged in quiet dialogue. Some were open in expressing their belief that they had ignored this important element of the religious community and had work to do. As Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, Interfaith coordinator of the Anti-Defamation League, put it, “This divestment movement is the bite on the rear end of 40 years of ignoring our differences.”²⁹ For some, even if they lost this battle they needed to maintain ties with this major Christian denomination. Not surprisingly, they found willing allies. For many on the Presbyterian side, there was a similar impulse, that this vote had produced levels of intense reaction that they had not anticipated, and that communication and some sense of shared community was important even if there was exceptional tension in the meetings. Both sides in their religious traditions had teachings on reconciliation and mending breaches, and both reached out instinctively to the other side for quiet dialogue. Both sides tried to open up to explain their concerns in a way that maintained the integrity of their position but at the same time listened to the other side. Time and again, those coming out of such meetings said how difficult they were. Both sides seemed anxious to show their good will by issuing public statements of solidarity when such things were needed. For example, when someone threatened to bomb the Presbyterian headquarters in Louisville, several Jewish groups issued statements of condemnation.

And the Presbyterians were quick to condemn antisemitism or suicide bombings in Israel when they occurred.

THE PRESBYTERIAN DISSENTERS

The second strategy of the Jewish side was more political. It was to align with those Presbyterians who had opposed the resolution or were pro-Israeli in their impulses. By their very nature, organizations become more ideologically cohesive at higher levels, so it was inevitable that many local Presbyterians would not be supportive of the resolutions. The Presbyterian Panel, which charts thinking within the denomination, found exactly this in their November 2004 survey (available at www.pcusa.org). Most members were not even aware the votes had been taken (61 percent of members and 51 percent of elders were unaware). More seriously, attentive members were less supportive: 73 percent of those who were very aware of the vote opposed it, compared with 34 percent of those not aware. Among the clergy, who would logically be more informed and interconnected on these issues, a predictable shift occurred: more favored than opposed the action (by 48 percent to 43 percent), but even then support was not solid.

One set of allies were long-time friends of Israel. Presbyterians Concerned for Jewish and Christian Relations had been dormant but reactivated itself to issue a press release condemning the vote. The National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel issued a similar statement. But other dissenters were surprisingly different in their profile. Some were supporters of Palestinian rights and critics of Israeli positions but had doubts about divestiture. Often such persons had close interfaith

ties with the Jewish community and did not want to damage those ties. Reverend Cynthia Campbell, president of McCormick Seminary in Chicago, put it clearly: "The divestment strategy, I think, unnecessarily alienates us from people we need, very seriously, to be in relationship with — the American Jewish community....We, as the Presbyterian Church, need to take this opportunity to really listen to why it is that this divestment issue has occasioned such a big reaction in the Jewish community."³⁰

Another dissenter was Reverend Barbara Wheeler, president of New York's Auburn Theological Seminary. Like Campbell, she was in the progressive wing of the church. Her critique had five points. First, "by its very nature, divestment is a strategy that can be effective only if widely adopted." Having the Presbyterians take a position that others have not supported "isolates the denomination without achieving any positive purpose." Second, divestiture aims to "create economic and political instability in the target country" and "destabilizing the government of someone else's country is a drastic step." Third, there is an implicit comparison with South Africa, a regime "so implicated in evil...that it lacked legitimacy." Israel is not the same, so "the divestment device is not a moral fit for this situation." Fourth, divestiture does not take into account the Jewish psyche. It "feeds Israeli insecurities and heightens defensiveness" making the effort of peace activists more difficult, so it becomes "less, not more, likely that Israel will modify policies that afflict Palestinians and will take risky steps toward peace." Wheeler suggested an alternate strategy of pressing the U.S. government to reactivate peace efforts (which had been suspended by the Sharon

government when it came to power in 2001). She also suggested that the denomination support “religious leaders and groups on both sides who are ardently seeking a peaceful and just resolution.” She did acknowledge that this is easier on the Palestinian side because of “our historic alliance with Palestinian Christians” and that “establishing working relationships with Jewish and Israeli groups is more of a challenge.” Finally, she noted that while the denomination had acknowledged how much Protestantism had been “implicated” in “anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism,” they had never “disowned or asked forgiveness” for these things.³¹

A second group of allies were more problematic for some Jews. The most pro-Israeli elements in the denomination were on the theological and political right, not the natural allies of mainstream Jews. The close relationship between the Jewish right and the Evangelical right has been a matter of controversy since Menachem Begin and the Reverend Jerry Falwell of the Moral Majority started it around 1979. The Jewish intellectual Irving Kristol wrote in *Commentary* magazine, a publication of the American Jewish Committee, that an alliance of expediency made sense. According to Kristol, “the support of the [religious right] could, in the near future, turn out to be decisive for the very existence of the Jewish state. This is the way the Israeli government has struck its own balance vis-à-vis the Moral Majority, and it is hard to see why American Jews should come up with a different bottom line.”³² When Alan Dershowitz called for an uprising within the denomination, only one element was in that state of mind.

For over two decades the denomination had been divided over several hot-

button issues of theology and social policy. The mainstream elements that controlled the denomination were more moderate on these issues but a dissident group had mobilized around a cluster of issues such as gay rights, abortion, conservative foreign-policy issues, women’s role in the church, and whether salvation came exclusively through belief in Jesus Christ. Individual congregations began to affiliate with what was called the Confessing Church Movement. They had their own web site and newspaper (*the Presbyterian Layman*) and a well-organized structure with annual meetings. They include in their ranks 12 percent of all Presbyterian congregations, with 20 percent of the members. Because of the indirect election of representatives to the General Assembly, it was difficult for them to control the denomination, but they were strong at some local levels, and there was open talk of an organizational schism.³³ Not surprisingly, the Confessing Church movement provided outspoken opposition to the resolutions. They created an online petition to “denounce” the “anti-Semitic resolution on divestment.” They said the resolution was “purposefully designed to cause the economic strangulation of Israel, one of the most decent societies and one of the most liberal democracies in the world. We do NOT support Islamic fascists who praise the Holocaust and publicly call for the annihilation of Israel.” They called upon the denomination to “rescind this offensive, illogical and mean-spirited” resolution.³⁴

MRTI RECOMMENDATION AND REACTION

In August 2005, MRTI recommended “progressive engagement” with five companies in which the Presbyterian

denomination had \$60 million invested. The phrase “progressive engagement” referred to the policy used in previous divestiture cases. It involved meeting with company officials to inform them of the church’s concerns, engaging them in “open and honest dialogue,” asking for modifications of corporate policy, working with the company to produce such changes, and introducing shareholder resolutions if these efforts failed. “The Committee may engage in a process with the shareholder resolutions over a period of several years to obtain that support or solution to the issue” and would only divest if all other efforts failed.³⁵ As Carol Hylkema, MRTI chair, described it to me, “divestment is the last option. Once the stock is sold, the leverage is gone. The goal is engagement. We want them to change their policy.”

The discussion over which companies to identify was not easy. The heads of the Presbyterian investing agencies, the Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian Church (USA) Foundation were resistant and constitutionally were not obligated to accept any divestiture recommendation.³⁶ A key meeting had been “tense and not always polite,” with the investment officers being “antsy about the outrage provoked... particularly among Jewish groups.”³⁷ They wanted the word divestment removed from any report. MRTI decided that since they could not “engage every perceived offender,” they had to narrow down the list to a smaller number of companies. They established six criteria: Does it provide services for the police or military to support and maintain the occupation? Does it provide products, services or technology of particular strategic importance to the support and maintenance of the occupation? Has it established

facilities or operations on occupied land? Does it provide products and services, including financial services, for the establishment, expansion or maintenance of Jewish settlements on occupied land? Does it provide products, services or financial backing to Israeli or Palestinian groups that commit violence against innocent civilians? Does it finance or assist in the construction of the wall? Since the General Assembly had condemned the Israeli wall or separation barrier (they used both terms) for penetrating into Palestinian territory, support for that project was also included.

The five companies identified were Caterpillar (for its equipment used in demolishing houses and building roads in the occupied territories), Motorola (for developing wireless encrypted communications for use in the territories and for being a “majority investor in one of Israel’s four cell-phone companies”), ITT Industries (for supplying “communications, electronic and night-vision equipment used by its forces in the occupied territories”) and United Technologies (for providing helicopters used in targeted killings). MRTI also included Citigroup, saying that according to a report in *The Wall Street Journal*, it had a relationship with a bank that was funneling money from Islamic charities to families of suicide bombers. Reaction was strong. Citigroup said the allegation was “an outrage.” Caterpillar said that “for the past four years, activists have wrongly included Caterpillar in a publicity campaign aimed at advancing their much larger political agendas. Over that same period of time we’ve repeatedly evaluated our position, as have our shareholders, and determined that, while the protests occasionally succeed in getting headlines, they

neither change the facts nor our position.” United Technologies asserted that “UTC has been widely recognized as an ethical and responsible corporation. Work on military programs is stringently regulated by the U.S. government, and UTC complies wholly with all policies and related regulations.”³⁸

Reactions from the Jewish community largely repeated previous denunciations. David Elcott, director of interreligious affairs of the American Jewish Committee, said the action was “morally reprehensible.” The Simon Wiesenthal Center said it was an “arrogant initiative” that “exposes a dangerous moral selectivity of politically motivated elites who are ramming through such resolutions....” Their spokesman said “by discounting Jewish lives, this campaign is functionally antisemitic.”³⁹ Several Jewish groups said the timing was bad, given the planned Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. If churches wanted to support the peace process, they should recognize that the withdrawal was a major step in breaking a logjam and should invest in the Palestinian territories, not pull out their monies. This became a repeated theme.

Stated Clerk Kirkpatrick said of the recommendations, “It’s not a campaign to divest from the state of Israel. We’re fully committed to the state of Israel. But it is a campaign to divest from particular activities that are doing damage and creating injustice and violence, whether that’s the building of the separation barrier, construction related to the occupation, or weapons and materials that lead to suicide bombings.”

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ANALOGY

Many Jewish leaders took umbrage at the fact that a divestiture strategy had been used in the struggle against South African

apartheid and was now being used against Israel. While individual Presbyterians used words such as apartheid in discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Presbyterian leadership had scrupulously avoided any such parallel terminology. There was no mention of apartheid or South Africa in the resolution, and Stated Clerk Kirkpatrick⁴⁰ specifically rejected such comparisons. The Anti-Defamation League addressed the matter:

In no way can the treatment of Arabs by the State of Israel be compared to the treatment of the Blacks of South Africa under apartheid. There is no Israeli ideology, policy or plan to segregate, persecute or mistreat the Arab population. Apartheid was a uniquely repressive system, through which South Africa’s white minority enforced its dominion over the black and other non-white racial groups who made up more than 90 percent of the population. Apartheid — which means “separate development” in the Afrikaans language — was enabled through a host of laws which banned blacks from ‘white areas,’ prevented blacks and whites from marrying or even having sexual relations with each other, and regulated the education of black children in accordance with their subservient social position. No such laws exist in Israel, which pledged itself to safeguard the equal rights of all citizens in its Declaration of Independence. Arab citizens of Israel have the full range of civil and political rights, including the right to organize politically, the right to vote, and the right to speak and publish freely. Moreover, Israel has declared its acceptance, in principle, of a sovereign Palestinian state in most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Whatever

your view of Israel, the Palestinians and the conflict, it is obvious that there can be no comparison to apartheid.⁴¹

Former Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Meron Benvenisti approached the matter differently.⁴² He noted that in South Africa the two sides shared the same faith, a fact that facilitated post-apartheid reconciliation. In Israel, there is no shared community, and Jewish-Muslim clashes are intensifying. Blacks and whites also interacted with each other and shared a “mutual economic dependence [that] made it impossible to create a true territorial division in South Africa.” This “bears no relation” to the Palestinian “one-sided dependence on Israel.” On the world scene, while the Afrikaaners were isolated, “Israel receives massive, unshakable support from a unified Diaspora Jewry and American aid” and is protected from “effective sanctions” by post-Holocaust concerns. Regarding the politics of numbers, South Africa had an overwhelming preponderance of non-whites, in comparison with the near parity of Jews and Arabs in Israel/Palestine. Partition might work in the current situation but not unification. In that regard, the South African government “supported the creation of the Bantustan institutions, funded them and subsidized their economy — in contrast to Israel, which destroyed Palestinian Authority institutions, smashed the economy in the territories and put the financial burden on the international community.” While whites and blacks believed they shared a homeland, making that struggle one for civil and political equality, Israelis and Palestinians have a desire for “national self-definition and separation.” Finally, while many white South Africans felt uneasy

about the morality of an ethnic regime, few Israelis question the ethics of a Jewish state. Most argue that the Jews are a national people inhabiting their historic homeland. There is “no feeling of guilt,” and the occasional cracks in the “national consciousness” are “plastered over” by raising the specter of the “existential threat.”

On the other side, many people see parallels. UN Resolution 3379 of 1975 (now repealed, after vigorous American efforts) based its conclusion that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination” upon an earlier 1965 UN definition of racism as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin.” A host of Israeli laws seem to meet these standards. Even some Jews have doubts. A poll by the American Jewish Committee found that 41 percent of American Jews thought the word “racist” applied to Israeli policy and 74 percent thought the word “chauvinist” was appropriate.⁴³ When Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990 and first met Yasser Arafat, he used a more historical model when he noted that both peoples were facing “a common form of colonialism.” In other words, both societies were dominated by transplanted European populations that considered themselves indigenous (and in fact were accepted by the major resistance groups — ANC and PLO — as having the right to remain in the land). These populations held nearly exclusive power and possessed most of the land (87 percent in South Africa, 93 percent within Israel, 30 percent in Gaza and 73 percent in the West Bank). Laws tended to separate the populations and maintain the inequitable relationship, and the Israeli regime is

creating a so-called independent state that would — like the Homelands — be non-viable and subject to domination. Comparable policies involved land confiscations, residency permits, identity cards, restrictions on movement, family separations, detentions, demolitions and the shifting around of populations. Both regimes also had ethnically exclusivist ideologies.

Nobel Laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa visited Palestine and saw definite parallels. He used words such as “disenfranchised,” “voiceless,” “injustice,” “oppression,” “collective punishment” and “home demolitions” to describe the Palestinian situation. “I’ve been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa. I have seen the humiliation of the Palestinians at checkpoints and roadblocks, suffering like us when young white police officers prevented us from moving about.”⁴⁴ As Israel’s highly respected columnist Nahum Barnea put it, “Thirty-seven years after the occupation, in the eyes of a large part of the world, Israel has become a pariah country. It’s not yet the South Africa of apartheid, but definitely from the same family.”⁴⁵

IMPACT

One early question was whether the Presbyterian vote would encourage other denominations to follow suit. As an official of the American Jewish Committee put it, “Our immediate concern was that the Presbyterian move would snowball and encourage other mainline Protestant denominations to go in the same direction.”⁴⁶ In the year following the Presbyterian action, several protestant churches did exactly that. As a Presbyterian news

item⁴⁷ noted, the vote “seems to have galvanized the worldwide Christian community around human-rights violations committed against ordinary Palestinian civilians living in the occupied territories, including minority Christian population in cities like Bethlehem.” Regarding the obvious point that it was Jewish soldiers committing the offenses, the report noted “Christians often dodge [this point] because it creates tension in Jewish-Christian interfaith dialogue.” Still, the “snowball” continued to roll. In November 2004 the Episcopal Church decided to study which of its investments were in companies linked to the occupation or to groups responsible for violence against Israel. In February 2005, the World Council of Churches (a confederal body with little governance authority) urged its 38 member churches with 77 million members to review their portfolios for companies profiting from or supporting the occupation; in June 2005, the Virginia and New England conferences of the United Methodist Church voted to investigate whether they had holdings in companies that profit from the occupation; in July 2005, the United Church of Christ decided to investigate the possibility of using “economic leverage” to pressure the parties to the dispute. And in June 2005, the Anglican Consultative Conference recommended that its 38 national churches with 77 million members replicate the process of the Episcopal Church and review their portfolios for companies profiting from or supporting the occupation or Palestinian violence. An official summarized their concerns: “We are fearful that the Christian presence in the Holy Land is dwindling. Our constituency are the Palestinian Christians. They are losing ground every day, they can’t go to work,

can't go to church. So the well-off and educated are leaving Palestine, and the community is drying up.”⁴⁸ In a move in the same direction, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 2005 endorsed a “Peace, Not Walls” resolution including a decision to use financial resources to “support the quest for a just peace in the Holy Land.” To some Jewish leaders it was a camouflaged call to divest.

Observers debate whether the South African divestiture movement had an impact. There were four probable results: First, it embarrassed white South Africans who found themselves turned into “the polecats of international politics,” as one Afrikaner put it. While provoking a defensive reaction, this also weighed heavily upon them and spurred reformist elements within the country. Second, it put pressure on Western companies operating in South Africa to provide scholarships, salary increases and promotions for their black employees, as well as community development funds for their neighborhoods. Third, it caused some institutions and corporations to distance themselves from the regime. This shocked the ruling elements and forced them to open their eyes to the reality of their isolation. Finally, it provoked a discussion in this country of policies that many leaders preferred not to discuss. In the end, the regime negotiated a transition to majority rule that avoided the civil war many had feared. The divestiture movement was a factor.

A separate question is whether the current divestiture movement can achieve the success of the earlier one. The answer hinges on why the previous movement was successful and whether the same conditions prevail today. Yossi Shain offered some observations on that earlier move-

ment that might be relevant to the current situation.⁴⁹ First, apartheid was a moral issue on which there were clear choices: racism was bad, opposing racism was good. In the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the issues are more ambiguous. Not only do few Americans see the conflict through a racial conceptual frame, but the Palestinian nationalist movement is associated with shocking violence and extremism. Israeli violence is often seen as reactive and hence morally justified. There is also a strong pro-Israeli sentiment filtered through a ‘like us’ cultural lens.⁵⁰

A second point was that the struggle against apartheid had civil-rights overtones that resonated with the public, giving them a framework to understand a complex issue. Many Americans saw Nelson Mandela as another Martin Luther King. In a sense, the movement became almost a domestic issue involving the dignity of Black Americans. Third, there was a broad coalition of groups supporting divestiture, many being white, while there was no significant mass public opposing it. In the current situation, it is an uphill battle to win popular support. Israel has significant elements of public opinion behind it, including an influential and well-respected Jewish community. Many leaders of the divestiture movement on college campuses are Arab-Americans, who are often seen as “not like us” or as advocating foreign interests.⁵¹ Whether the Presbyterian vote (and that of other churches) will change that dynamic is not clear, but the mainline Protestant churches are centrist in American society, so their action might shift the debate in a more mainstream direction. Fourth, the earlier movement embraced American values (democracy, equality, freedom), and there were excep-

tional South Africans to present their case in a way consistent with those values.

Bishop Tutu comes to mind. While there are several articulate and sympathetic Palestinians, most operate on the margins of American public consciousness, and none have the visible moral stature of the South Africans. Moreover, rightly or wrongly, many Americans see Arab values on issues such as democracy and the role of women as inconsistent with their own.

Finally, while the earlier divestiture movement challenged American foreign policy, the supporters of that movement argued persuasively that U.S. policy was out of step with American values. The Palestinian cause is supported in the Middle East by some of America's most vehement and violent opponents. This places the supporters of divestiture under a heavy burden as they struggle to persuade a skeptical public that a fundamental shift in American policy would serve America's interests or values.

It is clear that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is escalating over time, is inflaming the region and is contributing to the recruitment of violent extremists on all sides. The implications for America are not good. According to a poll by the Anti-Defamation League, 68 percent of Americans believe the United States is more likely to be targeted for a terrorist attack because of its support of Israel. Still, two-thirds of those with such fears would continue that

support.⁵² There is an ironic tension in public opinion.

In terms of long-range impact, one has to look at this vote from three perspectives. First, regarding the internal dynamics of the Presbyterian denomination, it confirmed a direction of Palestinian advocacy that is not likely to be reversed. Even the fact that presbyteries across the country had to hold workshops to explain and discuss the divestiture vote created a powerful educational dynamic. This development seems true of the mainline Protestant churches in general. Second, the vote highlighted the alliance of the Jewish right with the Protestant right. It is too soon to say if that will help or hurt Israeli influence in this country. What is certain is that it is creating tensions along political and theological fault lines within both the Jewish and Christian communities. Moderates on both sides cringe at where their right wings would take them. Finally, in terms of the domestic debate, the vote introduced a new ethical element into the discussion. It set a tone in which the Israelis are no longer seen as holding the moral high ground. It expanded the parameters of acceptable discourse, redefined the debate and led other religious people to engage the issues. It is too soon to tell whether this will produce any change in U.S. policy, but it will definitely have long-term implications on how the conflict is seen and discussed.

¹ Alexa Smith, "High-Level Presbyterians and Jews Discuss Israeli Development," Presbyterian News Service, August 2, 2004.

²The focus was non-religious Jews and those from mixed marriages. See Jason Byassee, "Can a Jew be a Christian? The Challenge of Messianic Judaism," *Christian Century*, May 3, 2005, pp. 22-27. In 2005, the denomination ended financial support for Avodat Israel, and the Philadelphia Presbytery ended its status as a "new church development." Reverend Andrew Sparks said his struggling congregation would be independent of PC(USA). His leadership of Messiah Now Ministries continued as a "validated" ministry, i.e., recognized by the denomination.

³Jerry L. Van Marter, "PC (USA) Leaders Disavow Comments Made by Delegation Members in Lebanon,"

Presbyterian News Service, October 20, 2004.

⁴ Kathy Lueckert was deputy director of the General Assembly Council and Peter Sulyok was director of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy. Reaction to their dismissal varied from anger that the meeting took place at all to anger that the two had been terminated.

⁵ In 2004, the Presbyterians adopted over 30 overtures that dealt with matters of public affairs. Included were statements on Iraq, Cuba, Columbia, Taiwan, torture of prisoners, legalization of immigrants, social security, USA Patriot Act, same sex unions, stem cell research, usury and HIV/AIDS in Africa. All positions were in a progressive direction.

⁶ Alexa Smith, "Taking Stock of Stock. Church Researching 'Selective' Divestment in Israel-Related Firms," Presbyterian News Service, August 2, 2004.

⁷ Several insights on process came from a presentation by Carol Hylkema, MRTI chair, in Dearborn, Michigan, in May 2005. The author chaired the panel of which Hylkema was a part.

⁸ The Presbyterian web site (pcusa.org) has extensive documentation. All web sites were accessed before September 2005.

⁹ Stated Clerk Kirkpatrick said the church considered Christian Zionism "not consistent with the basic values of Reformed theology because it makes use of idiosyncratic interpretations of Scripture to undergird a certain reading of current events, and to generate support for specific political goals that do not bolster work toward peace and potentially endanger Palestinian and Israeli people" (Clifton Kirkpatrick, "Statement from the Stated Clerk...Regarding Israel and Palestine and Outreach to Jewish People," July 20, 2004, www.pcusa.org). A resource sheet on pcusa.org ("Christian Zionism") identifies five core beliefs: First, "God's covenant with Israel is eternal and unconditional" and involves promises to the land. Second, "God's plan has always been for the redemption of Israel.... There are two covenants now at work, that given through Moses and the covenant of Christ. The new covenant in no way makes the older covenant obsolete." Third, biblical statements about God blessing the Jews (especially Genesis 12:3) are "applied literally" and "specifically to support of the modern state of Israel;" Fourth, the books of prophecy "specifically refer to events today" and spawn "countless books of end-time speculation involving the state of Israel...." Fifth, "The modern state of Israel is a catalyst for the prophetic end-time countdown. If these are the last days, then we should expect an unraveling of civilization, the rise of evil, the loss of international peace and equilibrium, a coming antichrist, and tests of faithfulness to Israel. Above all, political alignments today will determine our position on the fateful day of Armageddon." For a different approach, see Ronald R. Stockton, "Christian Zionism: Prophecy and Public Opinion," *Middle East Journal*, Spring 1987, pp. 234-254.

¹⁰ In 2005, Corrie's parents filed a negligence lawsuit against Caterpillar and another against the Israeli government. The Israeli suit was to force an investigation. According to Mr. Corrie (speaking in Detroit, June 20, 2005), Ariel Sharon promised a "thorough, credible and transparent" investigation with all evidence turned over to the State Department. The investigation exonerated the driver, but nothing was turned over. After protests, a State Department official was allowed to see the files. Secretary Powell's chief of staff wrote the Corrie family that the standards of investigation were not "thorough, credible and transparent." David Frum and Richard Perle describe her death quite differently: "Corrie was the young American who was accidentally buried under a collapsing pile of dirt as she tried to block an Israeli bulldozer from excavating tunnels used to smuggle arms and explosives into Israel" (*An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror*, 2003), p. 81.

¹¹ By way of context, some historians believe the first divestiture movement was organized in the 1770s by Anthony Benezet of Philadelphia, who persuaded the Quakers to divest themselves of slaves. This led to the effort to limit the slave trade and inspired the abolitionist movement.

¹² Arref was not aware of the earlier movement until she read *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central American Peace Movement*, by Christian Smith (University of Chicago Press, 1996). She modeled ISM on the philosophy and tactics of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi (personal communication). Corrie's emails were published in full in *The Guardian* and in *Harper's* and were extensively excerpted in *The Washington Post*. ISM member Tom Hurndall was shot in the head by an Arab Israeli soldier in 2003. The soldier was given a ten-year sentence in 2005.

¹³ Muriel Horrell (Compiler), *Laws Affecting Race Relations in South Africa, 1948-1976* (South African Institute of Race Relations, 1976), pp. 445-446.

¹⁴ Richard Bradley, *Harvard Rules: The Struggle for the Soul of the World's Most Powerful University* (Harper Collins, 2005) discusses the talk and its context. The talk itself is on the Harvard President's web site.

¹⁵ Kirkpatrick, "Statement From the Stated Clerk...Regarding Israel and Outreach to Jewish People."

¹⁶ Vernon S. Broyles III, "The Presbyterian Case for Divesting from Israel," *Christian Century*, February 8, 2004, pp. 30-32.

¹⁷ Alexa Smith, "GAC Authorizes Pastoral Letter on Assembly's Divestment Action," Presbyterian News Service, September 25, 2004.

¹⁸ See www.jewishvoicesforpeace.org, August 8, 2005.

¹⁹ Uriel Heilman, "Presbyterians Stand by Divestment Despite Dialogue with Incensed Jews," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, September 28, 2004.

²⁰ Rabbi Ira Youdovin, "Demonizing Israel, Whitewashing Terrorism," *Christian Century*, February 8, 2004, p. 34.

²¹ There is a tendency to say that critics of Israel harbor disguised antisemitism and that, while criticism of Israel is proper, some criticisms are not. Unfair criticisms include comparing Israel to South Africa or using the term "wall" to describe Israel's "security barrier," alleging that "wall" conjures up images of the Berlin Wall. Criticizing Israel without simultaneously criticizing Arab countries hostile to Israel is also evidence of latent antisemitism. Alan Dershowitz says in his introduction to *The Case for Israel* (John Wiley & Sons, 2003) that criticism of Israel is not inherently antisemitic, but his short chapter on divestiture uses the word twelve times.

²² Alan Dershowitz, "Presbyterians Shameful Boycott," *The Los Angeles Times*, August 4, 2004.

²³ One is reminded of Nelson Mandela's response to a Jewish leader who asked him in a Ted Koppel Town Hall meeting why he had met with Colonel Qadhafi and Yasser Arafat. Mandela said, in his low-affect manner, "There are those who want their enemies to be our enemies." The initial ADL statement was posted on the ADL website. The Foxman comment was in *ADL Frontline*, Winter/Spring, 2005.

²⁴ Rabbi Ira Youdovin, "Demonizing Israel, Whitewashing Terrorism," *Christian Century*, February 8, 2004, pp. 32-34.

²⁵ The ADL and other groups have focused upon Naim Ateek, the Episcopal Canon of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem, founder of the Palestinian Christian organization Sabeel. Ateek outlined his philosophy in *Justice, and only Justice* (Orbis, 1989). Sabeel has published a paper on divestiture, "A Call for Morally Responsible Investment: A Nonviolent Response to the Occupation" (2005). Many Jews are upset at the theological concept of the incarnation, which holds that since God came to earth in human form, it is possible to view oppressed people as being "crucified" or refer to "modern day Herods" (Nancy Glass, "One Year Later, Divestment Exposes Sharp Divide Between Jews, Protestants," Religion News Service, September 2005). The Moderator of the General Assembly for 2002-2003 was Reverend Fahed Abu-Akal, a Palestinian-American. Miti Raheb, pastor of the Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, was a guest at the 2004 General Assembly.

²⁶ The letter was posted on Berman's website. Signatories were Berman (D-Ca), Gary Ackerman (D-NY), Eric Cantor (R-Va), Barney Frank (D-Ma), Tom Feeney (R-Fl), Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), John Lindner (R-Ga), John Lewis (D-Ga), Deborah Pryce (R-Oh), Linda Sanchez (D-Ca), Lamar Smith (R-Fl), Henry Waxman (D-Ca), House Majority Whip Roy Blunt (R-Mo) and Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md). Feeney, Lindner and Pryce are from the 52 Presbyterians in Congress; Berman, Ackerman, Cantor, Frank, and Waxman are Jewish. Stated Clerk Kirkpatrick sent a vigorous response: "I very much regret your disappointment [at the Presbyterian vote], but in all candor, must also communicate with you that I am terribly distressed in the failure of the U.S. Congress to seek a peaceful resolution to this conflict that would both protect the right of Israel to live in peace with secure borders and the rights of the Palestinians to statehood and an end of the occupation of their territory.... It has been very disappointing to us that the U.S. congress has not proven to be an ally or a balanced arbiter in the negotiations for peace in the region. While congress has passed repeated statements against the Palestinian Authority, it has never passed a resolution condemning the continuous illegal construction of settlements in the West Bank. There has been nothing done by congress to pressure Israel to adhere to international law. Rather, Israel has been encouraged by congress to violate international law. The recent passage of House Resolution 713, which condemns the International Court of Justice and supports a wall that is in blatant violation of international law, is one case in point" (Clifton Kirkpatrick, "Response to Representative Berman and Others," September 27, 2004, cnionline.org).

²⁷ Eric J. Greenburg, "Jewish Groups Scramble to Head Off Divestment Push," *Forward*, October 1, 2004.

²⁸ Kirkpatrick, "Statement from the Stated Clerk...Regarding Israel and Palestine and Outreach to Jewish People."

²⁹ Glass, 2005.

³⁰ Smith, “GAC Authorizes Pastoral Letter on Assembly’s Divestment Action.”

³¹ Barbara Wheeler, “Divestment Strategy is Unwise, Ineffective,” *Christian Century*, February 8, 2005, pp. 32-24.

³² Irving Kristol, “The Political Dilemma of American Jews,” *Commentary*, 78 (1), July 1984, p. 25.

³³ In contrast, the Southern Baptist convention elects delegates by congregation, so conservative activists were able to take over that denomination in the late 1970s (Bill Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention*, Eerdmans, 1990). That would be nearly impossible in the Presbyterian system, hence the option of a schism. See Lewis C. Daly, *A Moment to Decide: The Crisis in Mainstream Presbyterianism* (Institute for Democracy Studies, 2000).

³⁴ Eric J. Greenberg, “Divestment Controversy Rages,” *Forward*, September 28, 2004.

³⁵ “Guidelines for the Implementation of Phased, Selective Divestment Related to Israel and Palestine,” Resource Sheet 20, February 2005, www.pcusa.org. See also Alexa Smith, “Criteria Set for Israeli Devestment Targets,” Presbyterian News Service, November 9, 2005.

³⁶ Toya Richards Hill, “Presbyterian Foundation Mainstay Dennis Murphy Retiring After 24 Years,” Presbyterian News Service, September 27, 2005.

³⁷ Smith, 2005.

³⁸ Documentation on the decision is on the MRTI website, www.pcusa.org/mrti.

³⁹ Kirkpatrick, “Statement From the Sated Clerk...Regarding Israel and Palestine and Outreach to Jewish People.”

⁴⁰ Simon Wiesenthal Center, “Presbyterian Divestment Plan Would Expose Israelis to Renewed Suicide Terror and Hamper the Jewish State’s Self-Defense,” August 5, 2005.

⁴¹ Anti-Defamation League, “Survey of American Attitudes Toward Israel and the Middle East,” March 2005.

⁴² Meron Benvenisti, “Apartheid Misses the Point,” *Haaretz*, May 19, 2005.

⁴³ American Jewish Committee, “American Jewish Opinion After the Gulf War,” 1992.

⁴⁴ Desmond Tutu, “Apartheid in the Holy Land,” *The Guardian*, April 29, 2002.

⁴⁵ Henry Siegman, “Sharon and the Future of Palestine,” *New York Review of Books*, December 2, 2004.

⁴⁶ David Bernstein, “Fighting Divestment’s a Marathon, Not a Sprint,” *Washington Jewish Week*, August 18, 2005, p.13.

⁴⁷ Smith, 2005.

⁴⁸ Daniella Peled, “Anglican Church Look at Divestment Sparks Concern Among British Jewry,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 17, 2005.

⁴⁹ Yossi Shain, “Ethnic Diasporas and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Winter 1994, pp. 811-831.

⁵⁰ Culture does not exist in a vacuum. In a March 28, 2002, column on MSNBC and in a Slate.com column, Eric Alterman compiled a list of 71 key media “pundits” and placed them on an Israeli-Palestinian support scale that found a very skewed distribution: Reflexively pro-Israeli, 86 percent; critical of both sides but ultimately support Israeli security over Palestinian rights, 7 percent; reflexively anti-Israeli and/or pro-Palestinian, 8 percent. The pro-Palestinians were Patrick Buchanan, Alexander Cockburn, Christopher Hitchens, Robert Novak, and Edward Said, a professor since deceased. Nearly half of the list were Jewish, with most being on the right of the political spectrum. Said was the only Arab. Alterman noted that there are two narratives coming out of the conflict, one that Israel is an innocent victim of terrorism, the other that a brutal occupation is generating extremism. Each narrative has an inherent solution, to crush terrorism or to end the occupation. Americans hear the first narrative, the rest of the world the second.

⁵¹ Ronald R. Stockton, “Ethnic Archetypes and the Arab Image,” in *The Development of Arab-American Identity*, Ernest McCaus, ed. (University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 119-154.

⁵² Anti-Defamation League, “Survey of American Attitudes Toward Israel and the Middle East.”