Ecumenical Christians from a number of different backgrounds, including Orthodox, Catholic, and evangelical denominations have written a letter calling on US President Bush to make peace in the Middle East his number one priority this year. The letter, signed by 39 church leaders, also expresses concern for the Christians living Gaza and the West Bank, and calls on President Bush to work towards alleviating their suffering. A noble aim you might say. Most Christians have a God-given love for the Jewish people, because they are God's people according to the flesh. They may not be living according to His will at present, but nevertheless they have a special place in our hearts. Not of course at the expense of any other people. But when these ecumenicals mention the Christian Palestinian suffering as a result of the "occupation" and "separation barrier", well, something just doesn't add up.

Quote: *"We bring to you our deepening concern for the welfare and future of the Palestinian Christian community. A small but vital part of the Palestinian society, Christians are rapidly emigrating to countries where they can gain the economic and physical security that is denied all Palestinians* ***living under occupation****. The future of the Palestinian Christians requires a solution to the conflict that will allow both peoples - Israelis and Palestinians - to live side-by- side in two states where all enjoy justice, peace and security...*

With the construction by Israel of the ***separation barrier****, many of the faithful - both Christians and Muslims - are excluded from the Holy City, and Jerusalem is severed from Bethlehem. Our second appeal is for you to work with Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to guarantee access to Jerusalem's Holy Places and religious liberty for all peoples.*

Not only do they lay the blame for Christian suffering at the feet of Israel, they completely fail to mention that Hamas and Fatah are the ones to blame for the erection of the "separation barrier", and the fact that its erection has saved possibly hundreds of lives. I also commented on an article a few months ago in which Christian Palestinians described the suffering they were enduring. They didn't mention Israel or the peace wall, but what they did mention was that Hamas terrorists were fire-bombing their premises, and accusing them of proselytising Muslims. And the low population of Christians in Bethlehem, for which the ecumenicals blame Israel, has been falling ever since Israel handed control of the town to the Palestinian Authority. They also fail to mention Christians and Jews do not currently enjoy access to all Jerusalem's holy places, thanks to the Islamic Waqf who administer the Temple Mount, while their letter implies that Israel is to blame for this.

Are these church leaders really concerned for peace in the Middle East? I don't think so. If they read their Bibles, their letter would sound entirely different. They would love the Jew as much as the Palestinian. They would love justice, rather than compromise with terror. They

would have a desire not to see God's land divided. They would travel to Israel and the territories, and help the poor and needy, instead of just writing letters about it. In reality, these ecumenical leaders' only concern is to be seen to be in favour of peace, to portray a good image of themselves. But just like Rick Warren's ill-fated trip to Syria , the sheep's clothing will eventually come off.

Matthew 7:15-17

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

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