

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Without Hanukkah, there's no Christmas to Celebrate

Blog by Sister Anastasia—Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary—Darmstadt, Germany

When Palestinians and their supporters claim Jesus as their own and deny his Jewishness, they help recreate the conditions for atrocities against Jews

If it weren't for the victory over an evil regime bent on destroying the Jewish people and their heritage, the course of history would have been different. If Judaism had been wiped out, then arguably there would have been no Jesus of Nazareth born of a Jewish woman in the land of Judea, circumcised on the eighth day, presented at the Temple in Jerusalem, and raised as a son of the Torah.

Yet, these days, in the town of Bethlehem, His birthplace, a non-Jewish Jesus is proclaimed. Jesus [has been reinvented](#) as a Palestinian prophet and messenger.

Denying the Jewishness of Jesus is dangerous. In Nazi Germany theologians promoted an Aryan Jesus and a deJudaized Bible in an attempt to synthesize Nazi ideology and doctrine (Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany*). Once you remove the Jewishness of Jesus, His Jewish kindred are fair game. The "Aryanization" of Jesus was already underway when in 1936 a German theologian called for the elimination of the Jews.

This was before the Final Solution was formalized in January 1942 at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin. In World War II, the term "Judenrein"(Jew-free), first used by antisemites in the 19th century, soon spread with devastating effect as a euphemism for deportation and murder. For both perpetrator and victim, it came at a price.

City after city was declared Jew-free. City after city later lay in rubble. Where synagogues burned, churches later burned. What began with words led to actions: industrialized mass murder – the Holocaust. And the outcome? A nation still struggling to come to terms with its Nazi past.

So the implications are serious when Palestinian leaders claim Jesus as one of their own, denying His Jewishness. Equally so when they call for a virtually Jew-free state, as is happening through the Palestinian-led BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement.

And the implications for us as Christians are serious when we take such views on board.

A church in Norway recently hosted a [photo exhibition](#) of the West Bank with the following description: "A hallowed atmosphere lies over the land. This is evident not least when looking at the people. Those who live with 'crucifixions' daily yet still stay there" (translated from the Norwegian). Wokeism at its worst? For some critics, the underlying message was clear: *The Palestinians are Jesus, suffering at the hands of the Jews.*

When we as Christians condone or support such trends, we may find ourselves complicit in denying the Jewish identity of Jesus, as well as in driving the Jews from their ancient land, promised to them in the Bible and ratified by international agreement. If driven from the land of their fathers, where are they to go in view of the rising tide of antisemitism worldwide?

In propagating such views we are not doing the Palestinians any favors either. They are [suffering under their own leadership](#).

Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel once credited the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber with saying, *When Messiah comes, why not ask if He's been before?* Perhaps, more to the point, we should ask as Christians, *When Messiah comes, will He acknowledge us, considering the way we have treated our elder brother Israel?*

Our late founder Mother Basilea Schlink once wrote: *"Who has been wounded and tortured to death so often as this, His people? Here, indeed, are the brethren of our Lord Jesus. It may well be that He often feels closer to His people Israel than to those proud Christians who believe in Him and yet refuse to acknowledge their guilt towards the Jews, their heartlessness in passing by their brother in his desperate need."*

Mother Basilea was addressing her fellow Germans but, as has often been observed, the Holocaust could not have happened if the way had not been prepared by centuries of Christian antisemitism in the West.

"So for how long are you going to repent?" When asked this question, Mother Basilea replied, *"So long as a Jewish heart is grieving, we will continue to express our grief for what happened."*

This year, in the run-up to Christmas, may we as Christians take a moment to pause and reflect and humbly ask God for forgiveness. Jewish existence has nearly been snuffed out because of us Christians (Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews*).

May the God of Israel kindle our hearts with a deep appreciation for the Jewish kindred of Jesus, who over millennia kept the flame of faith alive – even in the darkest days of the Nazi era. At great personal cost, they preserved for posterity, for instance, the Holy Scriptures and the Ten Commandments, the bedrock of our Judeo-Christian society. In gratitude may we show them all the love and kindness we can. And as we count the days until Christmas, may we have a fresh revelation of the Jewish Jesus born in David's city of Bethlehem, as echoed in so many Christmas carols.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sister Anastasia Kennedy hails from the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, an interdenominational, Lutheran-based religious order, founded in Germany in 1947, partly as apologists to the Jewish people. The order opened a guest house in Jerusalem in 1961 for Holocaust survivors, and are staunch Zionists. Sister Anastasia lives in the Motherhouse in Darmstadt. She has an immense love for the Jewish people and Israel.