

NEWS ABOUT THE LIVING STONES JOURNAL

For most of the last 24 years members of Living Stones have received the Living Stones Magazine twice yearly and its contents have included news from the Middle Eastern churches, reports of conferences and pilgrimages, reviews and articles. In other words, the magazine has tried to combine the function both of a newsletter and of a more academic journal. At a recent meeting, the trustees of Living Stones decided to introduce a new pattern by publishing a journal once a year and sending out newsletters separately.

In this way they hope the new Living Stones Journal will provide serious reading for our members as well as attracting new readers with specialist interest in Christianity in the Middle East. We also expect that the Living Stones newsletters will supply our members with items of more immediate interest at the time of publication. Responsibility for the publication of the Newsletter will be in the hands of Living Stones trustee Jo Simister while the editorship of the Journal will remain with Duncan Macpherson and Leonard Harrow to be aided a by a board of specialist editorial advisers.

For the time being, the format of the once yearly publication remains the same as that of Living Stones magazines hitherto. The first issue of the journal, anticipated next year, will have a different format and will consist exclusively of articles on the Middle Eastern Christian communities and of the issues which confront them.

The contents of this present issue of the Living Stones Magazine already reflect this more serious direction for our articles: Anthony O'Mahony of Heythrop College, University of London contributes an important piece on the future of Christianity in the Middle East; the 'From the Diaspora' series continues offering an interview by Jamil Bullata with the distinguished Christian Palestinian Dr Makram Khoury-Machool, and Suha Shakkour publishes a summary of her academic research on 'Christian Palestinians in London'. Two articles follow by Christian Palestinians who have benefited from the Michael Prior Memorial Fund: Usama Salman offers his views on the sometimes problematic relations between the institutional church and the Christian community in the Holy Land, and Grace Al-Zoughbi, in the first of her three articles on remarkable Palestinian Christian women, provides a study of Hanan Ashrawi.

The editors of Living Stones will consider appropriate articles for publication in the new journal and will also welcome letters, comments and suggestions as our publication takes on its new shape

CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Anthony O'Mahony

It is all too easy to be the bearer of bad news about Christianity in the Middle East. The last hundred years of their history has witnessed a profound series of crises. These have overtaken Middle Eastern Christianity in modern times. Displacement by war, genocide and interreligious conflict, leading to loss, emigration and exile, would seem to be the main experience of Christianity in the modern Middle East. Against this background of displacement, when allowed, Christians have sought to resettle and build anew. They have been able to make a significant cultural, political and economic contribution to Middle Eastern society. Some observers have suggested that there is a 'Christian barometer' which provides the world with an accurate measurement of the political atmosphere in the Middle East. Progress toward freedom, particularly religious freedom, in the Middle East can be gauged by focusing on the status of the large Christian minorities. Many are highly educated and multilingual and have studied and worked in Europe and North America, where they also have a large diaspora. The theory goes that as the Middle East becomes more free and prosperous, linked to the West and hospitable to minorities and women, the higher the probability that the Christians will continue to live and even return from abroad to countries like Lebanon, Egypt and Syria. And vice versa, if Christians sense that things are getting worse, and if the Middle Eastern countries they live in are losing their commitment to political, economic and religious freedom, they would tend to emigrate from the Middle East.

After the fall of the Baathist regime in 2003, the Christians in Iraq became 'the canaries in the coal mine' for the greater Middle East. The extent to which they are tolerated in the new Iraq is being watched closely by the Maronites of Lebanon, the Copts of Egypt and other non-Muslim populations of the region. The Christians in Iraq are deeply troubled by the rise of radical Islamic tendencies in both the majority Shi'ite and the former ruling class, the Sunni minority. For Iraqi Christians, the continuing spectre of growing insecurity, which has led to church bombings, kidnapping and assassinations, has created a situation which has caused them to leave in large numbers. Maybe as many as 300,000 have left Iraq never to return. Others are refugees in the region: in recent years some 150,000 in Syria and maybe up to 40,000 in Jordan. Some states have welcomed these newcomers and hope that they will stay, bringing their skills, and some hope that their presence will add to a diversity in society

which in turn will help support 'moderate' politics. In fact, previous generations of displaced Christians, particularly Armenians and other Oriental Christians, arrived in Lebanon and made that country (before the Civil War 1975-1990) a leading cultural and economic space for the region.

The twentieth century was a period of conflict, which has not left the Churches of the Middle East untouched. Ecclesial institutions that may have been settled in one place for many centuries have been displaced. For example, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, which was located at the Monastery of Mor Hananyo (Deir as-Za'faran) near Mardin since the thirteenth century, was transferred to Homs in modern Syria in 1923, and to Damascus in 1950 due to the destruction of the Syrian Orthodox community at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The Chaldean Patriarchate moved from Mosul to Baghdad in 1950. With the ongoing conflict in Iraq and the difficult security situation in Baghdad, it might be set to move again.

The long centuries of Ottoman domination fossilized the Churches in their division. Initially these Muslim rulers centralized all Christian authority within the Patriarchate of Constantinople (followed a few years later by an Armenian Patriarchate). It was not until the nineteenth century that reformist measures allowed these ancient Churches to be formally recognized. Modern crisis and contemporary ecumenism are beginning to bring down the barriers. In the course of the last decades, remarkable developments have taken place in the ecumenical relations between Churches in the Middle East, both on bilateral and multilateral levels—agreements that allow partial mutual participation in sacraments, formation of future priests, and catechesis. Three main factors can be identified as being responsible for these developments: the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century and the establishment (in 1948) of the World Council of Churches, the Second Vatican Council, and the large-scale emigration from the Middle East to Europe, the Americas and Australia.

Although this large-scale emigration has in general been disastrous from the point of view of the life of the indigenous Christian Churches in the Middle East, there have at least been two good consequences: emigration to Western countries has provided the possibility of publication without censorship, and it has brought the existence of the non-Chalcedonian Churches more into the awareness of the Western Churches—thus providing an opportunity and incentive for theological dialogue. Christian theologians have been calling for a new discernment to evaluate the theological and ecclesiological meaning of this new form of communion that is growing among Churches of the Middle East. The Christian Churches have become part and parcel of each other in some mysterious way.

Modern times have brought about a profound change in the configuration of Christian presence in the Middle East. In the last days of the Ottoman Empire,

Christians made up 20-30 per cent of the population. The Armenian genocide, the massacre of the Syriac Christians and the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey (there is still debate about numbers, but approximately a million and half Orthodox Christians and half a million Muslims) had a radical impact. Today there are barely 200,000 Christians in a population of seventy million in the modern Turkish republic, although there might be up to two million people of Armenian descent who issue from the large numbers of Christians taken as slaves or forced into Islam at the fall of the Ottoman Empire. A number of these each year re-trace steps to their (often grandmothers') original Christian faith. Christians in Syria are down from 20 percent before the Second World War to fewer than ten per cent (800,000). During the Lebanese Civil War, some 670,000 Christians were displaced, as opposed to 160,000 Muslims. Lebanon always had a Christian majority, but no longer. This has allowed the Shi'a community to emerge as the majority community and its political organizations, such as Hezbollah, to try and capture the state and challenge traditional Maronite Christian dominance. Since the beginnings of the 1960s and the internal Kurdish-Iraqi war, some one million Christians have left their northern Iraqi mountains and homelands to go into the lands of emigration. During this period Baghdad gained large numbers of Christians, and the Chaldean patriarchate relocated there in 1950. Although several hundred thousand of mainly Greek, Armenian and Syrian Christians left in the 1950s, the large Coptic Christian population in Egypt has traditionally not undertaken emigration until very recent times. One estimate is that perhaps twelve per cent of Copts now live abroad. Since 1948, some 230,000 Christians have left the Holy Land. The Christian population of Jerusalem may be down from 30,000 in 1948 to 5,000 today. There may be fewer than 150,000 Christians left in Iran, many having departed after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The Christian communities have inevitably lost many of their young and most educated members. The Churches thus not only lose part of their future, but also the potential leadership that should be charting the communities' fortunes. In some communities, this has seen more men leave than women and has changed the gender balance. Christian women marry Muslim men and this fractures the Christian population and diminishes it, with implications for property rights and the education of children.

All are aware that the Churches have lost many millions of their people to emigration, and that their diaspora communities have grown correspondingly, but the question of presence is a dynamic one. Today, large numbers of non-indigenous Christians, brought by the global economy, have come to live and work in the region. 250,000 Christian workers are estimated to be in Israel, and have been there for some time. These are made up of Eastern European

and Asian workers. There are large numbers of Filipinos, and increasingly Sri Lankans, Indians and Africans in the region, for example approximately 140,000 Asian workers in Lebanon, eighty per cent of whom are women. At times the traditional Churches are slow to provide for them.

In this changing situation, patterns of authority have altered. Somewhat marginalized by secular politics, the patriarchs of the different Churches have emerged as significant voices for Christianity in the political 'public square'. In the context of profound social and economic dislocation created by modernity, leading to political upheaval and lack of 'legitimate' political structures, religious revival has brought these traditional loci of authority to the fore. We think of the public role of the Coptic Patriarch Shenouda in Egypt, the Maronite Patriarch Sfeir in Lebanon, Michel Sabbah, the former Latin Patriarch in the Holy Land, the Melkite Patriarch in Damascus, to name but some.

To sum up, Christianity originated in the Middle East. The Christian presence there today bears witness to the global Church of the unity of its origins and the diversity of its expression. Christians also help maintain and sustain the diversity in the Middle East. However, there has been large-scale flight from the Middle East and this has implications for those left behind. Christianity in the Middle East has a witness beyond itself: let us hope that the Churches of East and West rise rapidly to this challenge, for the key to the future of this important region may lie with the few.

[This article is an extract from *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East: Studies for the Synod for the Middle East*, edited by Anthony O'Mahony, first published 2010 by Melisende, London]

FROM THE DIASPORA

Jamil Bullata interviews Dr Makram Khoury-Machool

What first brought you to the UK?

I first came to the UK in 1990 for my studies at the University of Oxford. At that point I had planned to stay in the UK. For family reasons though, I had to return to Palestine. I came back to the UK in 1999 to do my PhD at SOAS, at the University of London

What was your PhD on?

Having worked as a media practitioner, and as the journalist who announced the outbreak of the first Palestinian Intifada to the world's media in December 1987, and also as a Palestinian (Israeli citizen), I thought that the best combination

would be the integration between media and politics with special reference to the Palestinians in Israel. Therefore, my PhD focused on the Arab Press in Israel and how the Israeli establishment, despite repeated cultural hegemonic attempts via the press to control the Palestinians in Israel and obliterate their national-cultural identity, had failed. This was chiefly due to the counter-hegemonic activities in the Arabic Press of the Communist Party in Israel, which had Jews and Palestinians in its leadership, such as Imil Tuma, Imil Habibi and Tawfiq Tubi, Tawfiq Zayyad, Samih al-Qassim and Mahmud Darwish and others.

What have you been doing since you completed your PhD?

I started to teach at SOAS in the Department of the Middle East, where, amongst other things, I taught an internationally unique course that was fully dedicated to Palestinian literature. Shortly after that I was asked to teach at the University of Cambridge, in 2003, and since then I have been teaching in different forms and teaching different topics related to Politics, Culture and the Media.

Were you politically active in Palestine?

Yes, I was. In addition to my professional media profile (spanning, at different times, radio, television and the print press), my political activities were threefold. First, on the Palestinian Christian level and the preservation of Palestinian life in the so-called mixed Palestinian cities of Jaffa, Lydda, and Ramla. The second level was the steadfastness of Palestinian society in the so-called 1948 Palestine and in Arab-Jewish relations. The third level was the struggle against the Israeli occupation, which affected Arab-Jewish relations inside Israel and led to my involvement in the Peace Movement.

How do you maintain your Palestinian identity in the UK?

Firstly, through activities in the Palestinian community and then also through organisations that are interested in Palestine, the Arab World and the UK. Thirdly, I maintain my Palestinian identity through my continuous appearances in both the international and the Arab Media, giving academic analysis on issues in the Arab World. I have also formulated an authentic way through which we can both honour Arabs and non-Arabs who have dedicated their time to the Palestinian cause and to peace, and also encourage Arabs and non-Arabs in the same direction. For example, I initiated the public honouring of eminent members of the Palestinian community in the UK. In October of last year Jamil Bullata, FCA, was the first to be honoured, recognized and thanked, followed by Ambassador Afif Safieh in June 2010. My idea and initiative in this respect were well received by all and I am planning to continue this public recognition of deserving figures.

We need to honour deserving people while they are alive so that they are

aware of others' love and respect for them. Recognition will then be radiated to everyone and others will be motivated.

What does the future hold for Palestinians?

Considering my media background, and having been an educator for a decade, I'm a great believer in the power of education. If anything will improve the lives of the Palestinians worldwide, and those in Palestine in particular, as well as Palestinians in refugee camps, it is education. It is down to education and curricula, which on the one hand will maintain Palestinian sense of national identity and pride, and on the other, move them from the periphery to the centre of knowledge.

As a matter of fact, I introduced the philosophy of the 'New Arab' back in the mid-nineties (later to become a movement and contest the Israeli parliamentary election). This is based on the combination, or the integration of education and economy. Within the education part, the fostering of values is included, such as women's rights and the importance of technology and marketing in moving Arabs forward generally, but Palestinians in particular. For we have in our Arab culture characteristics such as honesty, courage, rationality and modesty, which, if married to education and economy can be the lift from marginalization to advanced societies. Therefore, I very much believe that in order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and preserve our national characteristics in an increasingly globalized world, we need to remain proud of our norms and beliefs but use the right crane to successfully operate globally. My nomination and subsequent election by the World Economic Forum (Davos, Geneva) in 1996, as one of one hundred Young Global Leaders, made me feel that independent personalities can still have a modest impact and that, since the Nakba we have been markedly and unjustifiably marginalized. However, we can still make it to the summit.

What was the destiny of your family during the Nakba?

I come from two large Palestinian-Christian families ('Khoury' means priest and 'Machool' is the shortened version of 'Michael') who were affected by the Nakba, in terms of land confiscation and expulsion. My immediate family survived in Jaffa, due to my maternal grandmother's insistence on dying in her own house and her reluctance to abandon her late husband's library, who had died several months before the Nakba. Professor Adib al-Khoury had been the Chief Inspector in the Education Department during Mandatory (British) Palestine.

Therefore, to honour my maternal grandfather, the late Professor Adib al-Khoury, who had also held the position of Professor of Theology and Arabic, and who had put a long generation of clergymen in the family on

hold, I have officially carried both family names since my youth. This is due to my egalitarian approach to my parents, and also because my late mother, the playwright, Antoinette Khoury, was an only child. However, it was only when I came to London that I met my grandfather's students and I have since been able to learn about his character through his students in the Diaspora and thus preserve part of the national memory by talking to them.

How do you see the role of Arab Christians?

Whilst Christianity developed as a critical movement led by Jesus in Palestine, Arabs in Palestine and the wider region admired and adopted it. For seven centuries, many Arabs, including those in the Gulf region, were Christian. It was within this set of norms and beliefs amongst Arabs that Islam partly developed. We are essentially talking about the same society, which embraced religions, if not spiritually, at least in terms of norms and beliefs, bringing together many shared values. Historically and anthropologically, every Arab-Muslim has Christian values in him and every Arab-Christian has Islamic values within him. The shared values, however, between Arab-Christians and non-Arab Christians make the role of Arab-Christians most valuable in fostering understanding between Western societies and the Arab World. If Arab-Christians are the bow facing the Western ocean, then Palestinian Christians are the arrow that will speed the message of understanding and love.

Do you see the Diaspora as having a new role?

Movement of population and processes of inculturation, including experiencing the 'Other', are nothing new. We have examples of not only Westerners coming to the Arab World and writing about the area and their experiences, but also Arabs visiting what is now Northern Europe and writing eye-witness accounts. Here, we can cite Ibn Fadhlān writing more than one millennia ago in the tenth-century, or even Faris Al-Shidyaq writing an account about Cambridge in 1848.

Migrating communities are another valuable human asset to both sides; due to their ability to operate in more than two societies, navigate between languages and strike a balance between different behaviours. This is why diasporic communities, if used and not abused by peaceful motivations, can spear goodness.

CHRISTIAN PALESTINIANS IN LONDON—A SUMMARY

Suba Shakour

Despite being a relatively small minority within the Palestinian population, the Christian Palestinians play an integral part in its composition. Their contributions both to the Palestinian cause and consciousness, and to the development of Palestinian art and literature are renowned throughout the Arab world. Furthermore, as early emigrants they helped to connect the Arab world with the ‘Western’ world and in doing so prepared the path for subsequent migrants. One such group of emigrants is the Christian Palestinians in London. According to the 2001 census, there are 4550 Palestinians residing in Britain, the majority of whom reside in London and Manchester. Of these 2550 are Christian, and 1690 are Muslim (Office for National Statistics, 2001). This figure, however, only includes first generation migrants born in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip and may also include non-Palestinians who have converted to either Islam or Christianity. It also does not include Palestinians who may have been born outside of Israel/Palestine, which for a population in exile, is extremely likely. It is important to note here, however, that given the limitations of the census, the above represents only a very conservative estimate of the size of the Britain’s Palestinian population, and in fact some estimates place the figure at close to 20,000 (Afif Safieh in *Matar*, 2005).

This article considers how well Christian Palestinians have adapted to life in London. It is based on interviews with 20 Christian Palestinians residing in London and the surrounding boroughs that focused on their English language abilities, educational achievements, attitudes to intermarriage, and their sense of belonging. As will be discussed, these aspects were chosen because they offer an insight into respondents’ private and public lives, a distinction that is particularly important in the study of integration and assimilation.

Education is a commonly used indicator in studies of the integration and assimilation of migrants for two reasons. Firstly, it is one of the few variables for which (relatively) accurate methods for measuring equivalency across nations exist, thus serving as a good starting point for the assessment of discrimination in employment opportunities and income levels. Secondly, it can also act as predictor of other variables, such as host language fluency, and give some insight with regard to the socio-economic status held in the home nation. Although important in the above ways, for the Christian Palestinians in this study, education has played a somewhat different and—I would argue—more significant role. Many respondents in this study had attended Christian elementary and secondary

schools in Palestine/Israel established by North American and European, including British, Christians, the so-called ‘missionary schools’. Despite also contributing to the spread of Western imperialist ideology, these schools also provided a high standard of education and, crucially for the respondents in this study, shared a curriculum with many American, British, and European schools, and exposed their students to ‘Western’ mannerisms and customs. In addition to this, many schools also held their classes in English or another European language (depending on the founders’ nation of origin). In many ways, this made the period of adjustment to life in Britain more tolerable. While they continued to miss their homeland, Britain was, in a sense, familiar. This should not, however, be confused with an easy transition into their new lives in Britain. Knowing what to expect may have mitigated the immediate culture shock, but there can be no easy transition into exile, even when it is self imposed.

One of the challenges that many respondents were able to overcome only after several years of living in Britain was understanding the English accent. While they had studied English in school, it had not prepared them for wide variety of the accents and linguistic customs they encountered post migration. One respondent’s experience illustrates this point well:

I realized that no matter how well you speak English, trying to understand their accent is a completely different thing. I had to watch their mouths move to understand what they were saying. Plus the traditions were completely different. I always opened my mouth at the wrong time, or said things that in the Arabic culture were meant jokingly, and they would get offended. So I found that really, really hard to understand, but you get used to it, and I learned.

Speaking the language well is crucial for integration and assimilation into the host nation both because it allows migrants to communicate, and so form relationships, with their native born counterparts and other migrants, and because without it, finding work can be very difficult. Thus, many respondents in this study dedicated much time and resources to learning English well, be it through classes, speaking to their children’s friends and parents, and even watching English films and television. It is important to note here, however, that dedication to learning English did not come at the expense of maintaining Arabic and passing it on to their children—quite the opposite, in fact. In addition to being their mother tongue, along with all the sentimental and emotional significance that implies, for the Christian Palestinians in this study Arabic was the language which united them as Palestinians and tied them to other Arabs. There can be little doubt that this was due in large part to the emphasis placed on Arabic during the Arab nationalist movement as an element that all Arabs held in common, regardless of the various dialects that members of individual nations might speak, and the

detrimental effect that colonialism had had on the everyday use of Arabic in some areas. As such, it came to be seen as a significant element of Arab identity, and a language of which an Arab individual could, or rather, should be proud (see for example, Tibi, 1997; Suleiman, 2003). As Al-Husri famously noted,

Every Arabic-speaking people is an Arab people. Every individual belonging to one of these Arabic speaking people is an Arab. And if an Arab does not recognize this, if he is not proud to be an Arab, then we must look for the reasons that have made him take this stand. His view may be the result of ignorance: in that case we must teach him the truth. It may spring from false consciousness: in that case we must enlighten him and show him the right way. It may be an expression of his egoism: in that case we must limit his egoism. But under no circumstances should we say: 'He is not an Arab...'. He is an Arab whether he wishes to be one or not ... (in Tibi, 1997, p. 189.)

Thus, continuing to speak Arabic, and passing it on to their children was for many respondents a way of retaining a connection to a past, a place, and a people to which they and their children inherently belonged.

The attachment to Arabic should not, however, be misinterpreted as a lack of desire to form relationships with or marry fellow Britons, a feature which is often considered to be a 'litmus test' of sorts for integration and assimilation, since it is assumed that intermarriage only takes place if groups are similar enough to one another or that prejudices on both sides have been resolved. In fact, the majority of respondents had many British friends and some had themselves married British or European spouses, though the latter was more true for men than for women. This can be partly attributed to the patriarchal nature of Palestinian households whereby males, even at quite a young age, are encouraged to behave as 'heads of households'. They are expected to be more independent than their sisters, encouraged to make their own decisions, and rewarded for being somewhat rebellious—as long as their defiance does not interfere with their obligations in the age and gender based hierarchical respect system where older men hold the highest position. In the present study, this manifested itself in the way that male and female Christian Palestinian respondents described how they had chosen their spouses. While men, regardless of their age, claimed they had chosen, or would choose, their spouses because they loved them, among women the situation was somewhat less straightforward. Contrary to expectations that younger women would be more likely to choose their partners freely—a hypothesis that was based on the rise in the popularity of feminist literature and higher levels of education—it was in fact the oldest female respondents in the group who stated that they chose their partners simply because they loved them. Interestingly, these were the same women who had attended the 'missionary schools', spoke English well

even prior to migration, and as a result had had a greater level of interaction with foreigners while they were living in Palestine. Among the younger generation, their reluctance to choose their partners freely, and tendency to want to obey their parents' wishes is somewhat more difficult to explain. One possibility, based on their responses to questions exploring where they felt they belonged, their relationship with their families, and their desire to return to Palestine/Israel, is that loyalty to the Palestinian cause is sometimes interpreted as loyalty to Palestinian traditions and a Palestinian way of life. Thus, for the young women in this study, maintaining a connection to their Palestinian identity may have been associated with a desire to adhere to gender specific expectations.

Conclusion

Considering these aspects of individuals' lives, however, only examines part of the picture. Ultimately, it is how strongly individuals feel they belong in their new homelands that determines whether they will acquire "the memories, sentiments, and attitudes" of the indigenous persons and groups, as assimilation is technically defined. (Park and Burgess, 1929, p. 14). While this is a difficult process for both migrants and exiles, for the latter group this is additionally complicated by the fact that exiles—in some cases they are the only aspect of the homeland that has survived.

Although there has been a large amount of research dedicated to the study of Palestinians in the diaspora, a consideration of its Christian members is notably absent. The trend has been to treat the Palestinians as a homogeneous group, despite the inherent differences within their community. Common media depictions tend to mobilise images that conflate 'Arab' and 'Muslim', thus denying the lived complexity of being Palestinian either at home or in diaspora. The lack of research is due in large part to the shortage of reliable data, which may be attributed to the fact that as a small minority, and they are frequently overlooked. This study emphasises that while Christian Palestinians may have been able to rely on a number of advantages related to their faith group (e.g. earlier access to education while in Palestine/Israel), they do not consider themselves to be substantially different from their Muslim counterparts. Their attachment to Palestine and affection for one another was evident regardless of age, faith, the circumstances surrounding their migration, or their desire (or lack thereof) to return. In fact, the sense of belonging to Palestine was one of the few elements that united the respondents. Thus, despite the theory that Christian Palestinians would be more likely to feel 'at home' in Britain as a consequence of sharing the same faith, it is their status as exiles which plays a much larger role in determining their perceptions of themselves.

It should be noted here that given the small sample size of this study, the conclusions from this thesis are not generalizable, and serve to highlight that additional work in this area is essential for a better understanding of Palestinians in the diaspora as members of both their home and host lands. However, in pursuing this research, it is important to reject the idea that by studying the differences within the Palestinian population we are necessarily creating divisions within it. They have, after all, and as illustrated herein, remained united despite their internal diversity and the considerable differences in their ways of life depending on their nation of residence, and this has been one of their greatest achievements.

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**THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH AND THE CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY IN THE HOLY LAND**

Usama Salman

As custodians of Christianity in the Holy Land, local Christians, as well the Christians world-wide, are obliged to try better to understand the complex history of Christianity in the Holy Land and the events that shaped their present faith and identity. Unfortunately, the majority of Holy Land Christians are aware of neither basic religious doctrine nor historical facts, having to refer to church leaders, scholars and other writers. This lack of educational background has left the local Christian community as ignorant of Christian theology as the international Christian community is of the problems facing the Christian community in the Holy Land.

The complex history of Christianity in the Holy Land can be divided into two parts; the historical development of the church in the Holy Land, and the development of local Christians as a continuous living community.

The church authorities in the Holy Land have serious concerns about the religious message in their local parishes which determine the relationship between the church and the local Christian community. In a 2006 survey, close to three-quarter of respondents claimed not to have close relationship with their church and 7 out of 10 thought that religious authorities lacked an adequate

interest in adult religious education.¹ Both of these results should provide a clear warning call for all the churches, irrespective of church affiliation.

The local Christians in the Holy land expect the parish clergy and church authorities to cooperate more with the lay people in the community. On the other hand, the survey revealed that over 91 percent show a clear commitment to the whole family attending Sunday services, and that they maintain respect for nuns and clergy who are active in community life. The Sabeel survey showed by locality that 96 percent are committed to participating in public life as much as others in Palestinian society.

The Christian educational institutions and their impact on the local community is also an important matter of concern. Education for the Christian community in the Holy Land is highly valued and is seen as a means to securing a decent income. From the nineteenth century onwards Palestinian Christians had access to education through foreign education institutions mostly through European missionary sponsorship of schools to serve the local population. These schools have left clear impact on the community and its outlook. The advantage that Palestinian Christians derived from education was reflected in the development of their socioeconomic, occupational and employment profile, enabling many of them to adopt a middle class life style along with both the advantages and limitations of such a life style. It can be argued that the European educational institutions, by exposing Palestinian Christians to foreign languages and cultures, accelerated among them the notion of relative deprivation and lack of belonging to the land. This was felt first towards the turn of the twentieth century when Christians began to compare the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire to the progress being made in Europe and America and this stimulated the process of emigration to North Central and South America. On the other hand, some of the Christian educational institutions first tasks in the Holy Land were to care for the European pilgrims coming to visit the Holy Places. In order to insure an easy and fruitful visit for these pilgrims to the Holy Land, and for the sake of securing work for a number of local citizens as tourist guides, they were keen to create a group of educated citizens who were fluent in European languages, especially Italian, considered as the language of the largest number of European Christians.²

Currently, there are about 108 Christians and private educational institutions that provide educational services to both Christians and Muslims. 50 of these institutions are in the West Bank and Jerusalem areas.³ According to Romell Soudah, 91.4 percent of Christian students in the West Bank and 67.1 percent

1 The sabeel survey on Palestinian Christians in the west bank and Israel, summer 2006 P.71.

2 Article by Fr. Halim Nujian ofm, "Terra Santa schools historical Synopsis" website: www.christrex.org, 2009

3 Christian information center.

in Israel are in Christian and private schools.⁴ However, the overall majority of the students attending these schools are Muslim.

The Sabeel survey indicates that 81 percent of the students' parents are not concerned with the religion of the schools and 74 percent of the adults have no relationship with the church.⁵ These findings create a question mark regarding the real goal and mission of these Christian educational institutions and their role in fostering Christian identity. According to the consultant committee of the Latin Church in Jerusalem, one of the weaknesses that occurred among the Christian community in the Holy Land is the lack of knowledge of Christian history with little of such information being provided in most Christian schools.⁶ All the Christian education institutions in Jerusalem and the West Bank are expected to follow the Palestinian curriculum as required by the Palestinian Authority—compounding the problem of educating Christian students about Christian history.

According to *Consolidated Report Studies on Palestinian curriculum and textbooks* that was delivered in Palestinian schools based upon extensive study over more than a decade: 'students have a strong sense of identity anchored in being a member of a Palestinian family and are beginning to have a sense of their own culture, history and geography. Integrated in their identity are strong values based on Islamic beliefs and these include tolerance.'⁷

In Palestinian history textbooks for several grades, the main subjects, topics and themes are from birth of Islam to the Abbasid period, Middle Ages, and the history of the Islamic-Arab civilization thus presenting a self-image of Arabs largely defined by their religion and not by language or nationality. Another important finding is the image of the others: this is usually the second largest section in each textbook review and received major attention by the author of the study. It also is discussed in the conclusion to the study. 'While the textbooks acknowledge important intellectual input from the "others", the textbooks do not offer detailed descriptions of these others. The report gives an example when discussing the "image of the other" developed in some of the textbook, the author describes how the textbook describes other religious groups and the description of other religious groups is rather brief. The "others" are sometimes described

4 Soudah Romel, 2006. Christians in the Holy Land across the Political and Economic Divide. [online]. [Accessed 15 June 2007]. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.sabeel.org/pdfs/thepercent20sabeelpercent20survey_.pdf>

5 Sabeel Survey on Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Israel, 2006. P. 88,89.

6 Consultant committee, Latin Parish in Jerusalem, problem analysis parish meeting, 2006.

7 UNESCO Headquarters Paris—Division of Quality Education, *Studies on the Palestinian Curriculum and Textbooks Consolidated Report*. Study description sheet "'Peace is our Dream (An Impact Study of the Palestinian Curriculum),

as aggressive and greedy intruders and occupiers, although sometimes they are portrayed as courageous. The author calls for teaching more about the “others”.⁸

Third, in the study description sheet on the Palestinian geography textbook, the main finding is that Islamic religious values are imparted explicitly and implicitly in all textbooks, although defining and discussing the Islamic world starts with a secular approach that discusses different schools of thought in environmental geography. The three textbooks avoid mentioning or naming Israel or of showing it on the map. Palestine is left unclear in terms of territory or demography, or the term is used to refer to historical Palestine (under the British Mandate before 1948). Palestine is treated as belonging to Greater Syria.

Fourthly, in the section on ‘Democracy, History and the Conquest’, the Palestinian Curriculum is nationalistic. Without meeting hatred, violence and anti-Semitism, it does little to support peace and some of the argument is wildly exaggerated or inaccurate.

This research analysis illustrates some of the weakness for Christian schools regarding the strategic message of the church and highlights negative influences that weaken the local Christian community’s sense of belonging to the Palestinian people as a whole.

HANAN ASHWARI

Grace Al-Zoughbi

In this, the first of a series of articles, Grace Al-Zoughbi writes on the contribution of remarkable Palestinian Christian Women. This article is based on a research dissertation for her MA degree supported from the Michael Prior Memorial Fund. Grace engages with Martha Nussbaum’s categories of capabilities approach⁹, giving a sketch of Nussbaum’s most important ideas which guide Grace’s study. An important part of Nussbaum’s thought has been dedicated to identifying and describing the conditions necessary to a flourishing human life. She believes that such a life must be characterised by the possibility of functioning in certain ways. These ways of functioning is what Nussbaum call ‘capabilities’.

Culturally in Palestine, women are looked down upon as the inferior sex. At the birth of a baby girl, the words, ‘May God recompense!’ are often heard from the family. Considered alongside the Arab proverb that the burden of a daughter is felt until the grave, the life of a woman is not set to be an easy

8 UNESCO Headquarters Paris—Division of Quality Education, Studies on the Palestinian Curriculum and Textbooks Consolidated Report. Study description sheet ‘The New Palestinian History Textbooks for Grades 6-8’.

9 Nussbaum, Martha C., *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge: CUP, 2000.

one from the beginning. In a sense, a woman's destiny is decided by her gender and the best hope a woman can have is to get married and to become a mother. Christian women have to battle against these traditional views, but also against the stereotypes. The role of Christian women as educators is therefore severely limited.

From a Christian viewpoint, one has to recognise the huge lack of female presence and influence within the field of theology, ministry and the church. If Christians are an embattled group in Palestine, Christian women are fighting from a hugely disadvantageous and underprivileged position. Our aim is to look at their work and achievements in the midst of an unfavourable, if not hostile, environment. We shall seek to pinpoint the ideals that guide these women and the goals they are trying to achieve and explore their capabilities in life.

Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi was born to Palestinian Christian parents in 1946 in the West Bank city of Nablus. Daoud Mikhail, Ashrawi's father, was one of the founders of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Hanan grew up in the West Bank city of Ramallah where she attended the Ramallah Friends Girls' School. In 1967, while she was studying English Literature at the American University of Beirut, the Israeli Six-Day War broke out. Israel took control of the West Bank and of Ashrawi's home town. Being outside her country, Hanan was declared 'absentee' by the Israeli Authorities and not allowed to return to Palestine. During the following six years, Hanan travelled and continued her studies overseas, gaining a PhD in Medieval and Comparative Literature at the University of Virginia. While in exile in Lebanon, Ashrawi became the spokesperson for the General Union of Palestinian Students in Lebanon. Eventually, Ashrawi was allowed to return to Ramallah in 1973 and she established and became chair of the Department of English at Bir Zeit University. In 1986 she was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Bir Zeit University. She continued to be a faculty member at the University until 1995. It was while being an academic at the University, from 1973 onwards, that Hanan Ashwari became actively and politically involved in the Palestinian cause.

Ashrawi in Politics

During her time at Beit-Zeit University, Ashrawi delivered speeches, participated in demonstrations, wrote newspaper articles in support of the Palestinian cause. In 1973, she founded the Bir Zeit University Legal Committee and Human Rights Action Project. But she burst on the world political scene when she appeared on ABC's programme 'Town Meeting' broadcasted from Jerusalem in April 1988, a few months after the breakout of the first *Intifada*. Almost instantly, she became the voice of the Palestinians to the outside world. In 1991, Yasser Arafat appointed her as official spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation to

the Middle East Peace Process, negotiations that led to the 1992 Madrid Peace Conference. From 1993 to 1995, with the endorsing of the Oslo Accords by Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, Palestinian self-rule became recognised. In 1993, Ashrawi became one of the founders and head of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights whose role is to safeguard the freedoms of all Palestinians and to ensure in particular that women are protected from any kind of discrimination. Since 1996, Ashrawi has worked as an elected member of the Palestinian Legislative Council in Jerusalem. She became Palestinian Minister of Higher Education and Research and was Head of the Political Committee. The same year, she founded MIFTAH—the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, an initiative which promotes respect for Palestinian human rights, democracy and peace.

Ashrawi's Philosophy of Change

The key value Ashrawi believes in and is prepared to fight for is the essential humanity and dignity of human beings everywhere: 'what we have in common as human beings is more essential and important. What should be the focus of all cultures and of all pursuits, political or otherwise is the respect of human beings.' As a result, she says that the only approach to politics is a moral one.

This also explains why she denounces the 'de-humanisation' of the Palestinians through the use of stereotypes and slurs in the world press and in the Israeli propaganda.

Ashrawi stresses that the idea of humanity is inseparable from human rights. She promotes human rights as essential to every aspect of her work, maintaining that today's human rights' violations are the causes of tomorrow's conflicts. She has lived all her life in a land where basic political liberties and human rights were denied to Palestinians; she has also witnessed the fact that the absence of these political liberties have a serious impact on the well-being and the flourishing of her fellow-Palestinians.

Although she does not describe herself as a feminist, Ashrawi is prepared to fight for woman's rights. She affirms that Human Rights must be extended to all women. Ashrawi is a fervent advocate and supporter of the involvement of women in society and politics. At Bir Zeit, Ashrawi started a study group for female students. She even decided to reach out to like-minded Israeli women, armed with a map of joint gender concerns.

Her concern for women's rights explains her decision to set up the Commission for Citizens' Rights. The aim of the organisation is to safeguard the freedoms of all Palestinians and to ensure in particular that women are protected from any kind of discrimination and so to enable gender empowerment. It investigates all complaints made by women who are denied their rights or are excluded from positions of power, seeking to increase the involvement of

women in all areas of life. Ashrawi was also a member of the Palestinian-Israeli Women's Network who mounted a series of public demonstrations calling for freedom from the bondage of violence.

As an articulate activist and a spokeswoman for democracy and human rights, Ashrawi's aim is to elevate justice on a national level. She considers that the Palestinian problem is not humanitarian but political. It is about the denial of the rights of freedom, justice and self determination. She maintains that actions must be taken to arrive at a just and peace-centred solution to the Palestinian problem. But Ashrawi is aware that justice must also prevail in Palestine itself through the creation of a democratic society:

No one can overestimate the disruptive and destructive impact of the current crisis and of Israel's brutality as a belligerent occupant; to withstand such assaults, however, it is imperative that the structures and systems of democratic life be maintained as the most constructive and efficient form of empowerment of the victims to enable them to withstand such an external assault. Equality before the law, due process, and the presumption of innocence must all be maintained.

Ashrawi says: 'knowing the facts, gaining this knowledge and information means that one has the responsibility to stand up and to speak out, and it does take courage to do that.' She repeats that witnesses should not remain silent but denounce publicly Israeli violence and oppression. Having become a spokeswoman of the Palestinian cause, particularly in the US, she decided to 'reach the world not just by confronting Israeli soldiers with our stones of defiance but by confronting the world with our reality.' This is how she started a campaign of information by creating a pool of speakers who participate in conferences and seminars all over the world.

Ashrawi believes that small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change desperate situations in the world. Indeed, one of her main tenet is her trust in the strength and of motivated individuals to bring about change, even in the face of severe threat and repression. She has fought herself, often alone, under difficult and dangerous conditions. She insists that individuals in the midst of a thankless job, must demonstrate tenacity, perseverance and courage: 'Nothing, dear friends, can match the power of an undefeated human spirit, simultaneously subject to the fragility and vulnerability of the human condition, yet tenaciously persistent in its struggle to engage and transform reality as a source of value and a force for change.'

A Vision of Hope: Future Peace

Ashrawi is aware that the sufferings of the past and the difficulties of the present often destroy any hope in the future. Palestinians might be overcome by feelings of despondency, hopelessness and resignation. But she says: 'we must roll up our sleeves and work with the current situation to change this sense

of disempowerment. The moment you lose your will and become trapped in reality you lose your freedom.'

Developing her view of what a vision is, she explains: 'to have a vision, we do not need to think about only utopian views or unrealistic idealism. We must look at what ought to be and not only at what is, employ a sense of creativity and imagination with boldness, courage, candour and honesty.' The pursuit of this hope is in reality the pursuit of peace between Palestinians and Israelis: 'peace is an active pursuit. It is a basic human right. It is not a gift bestowed on the weak by the strong. It is not a privilege. I believe that peace is a right, and therefore should be pursued.' Ashrawi maintains that only the moral concept of peace is the concept that 'could provide a starting point to challenge the thinkable and to think the unthinkable.' Being driven by this vision of a good future characterized by justice and peace, she concludes her autobiography by writing that she and the Palestinians will confront the future 'unrepentant and untamed, but armed with the knowledge of our own sorrow and in possession of the full potential of a joy yet to come.

Functional capabilities that Ashrawi seeks to uphold

1. *Life.* Ashrawi's overall political aim in fighting for Palestinian human rights is to ensure that Palestinians can enjoy life that is worth living in all its dimensions, safeguarded from oppression, threats and discrimination.
2. *Bodily health.* By working at the creation of an independent and free Palestinian state with recognised boundaries, she upholds the rights of human beings to enjoy security from outside the interventions.
3. *Bodily integrity.* Ashrawi defends the freedom of movement of Palestinian people and their protection from restrictions imposed arbitrarily and often violently by Israeli policies.
4. *Senses, imagination, thought.* Her involvement in the academic world at Bir Zeit University demonstrates that, to her, critical thinking, reasoning, artistic expressions are fundamental to human life.
5. *Emotions.* As a writer, her work supports this capability. Her aspiration is to see a Palestinian state in which all the rich emotions of human life can be expressed freely.
6. *Affiliation.* Her fight to establish a democratic Palestinian state reflects her concern for a just society in which political institutions will protect freedom of associations and speech, ensuring that the dignity of each individual is protected.
7. *Control over one's environment.* Her democratic ideals demonstrate that she wishes to see a state that upholds free political choices and strengthens participation. Through her denunciations of Israeli policies towards Palestinian assets in land and buildings, she supports the capability of holding property.