

EDITORIAL

This issue of Living Stones opens with the ten-point declaration by representatives of the three faiths of Christianity, Judaism and Islam on the way forward for peace in the Holy Land. This historic declaration was produced by a consultation of religious leaders from the Holy Land, hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey. It follows an earlier meeting in Alexandria that established a formal framework for discussion and consultation across the religious divides. The original meeting produced a declaration signed by representatives from the three faiths and constituted a unique commitment to peace and reconciliation. That declaration issued in Alexandria, on 21 January 2002 called for a ceasefire 'respected and observed on all sides', and for 'the implementation of the Mitchell and Tenet recommendations, including the lifting of restrictions and return to negotiations' on the part of Israelis and Palestinians. The new declaration sets out ten points that recognise the challenges ahead in implementing that agreement and seeks to set areas of work for the future.

Three-way faith co-operation of this kind is always desirable and Michael Prior's, 'Anti-Zionism Equals Anti-Semitism?' warns that bilateral relations between Christianity and Judaism have often been hijacked for political ends that prevent western Christians from hearing the voices of the Palestinians. This important article is reprinted with the permission of the editor of *Doctrine and Life*, published by the Dominicans in Ireland. 'Voices from the Holy Land' includes two powerful statements directed to a North American audience. One of these is from a letter to Colin Powell from the Jerusalem Churches and the other is a powerful speech given by the Latin Patriarch, Michel Sabbah, to the American-based Christian Ecumenical Foundation of the Holy Land. There follows a press release from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate protesting against the threat to destroy a hundred Christian homes in Beit Sahour.

The second part of 'Patterns of Pilgrimage' compares mediaeval Catholic, 19th-century Russian Orthodox and Protestant and modern patterns of pilgrimage to the Holy Land and attempts to identify the differing elements and emphases of each.

In 'From the Diaspora,' David Toorawa interviews Dr Salem Khamis. The issue concludes with an article on Bethlehem University by Matthew Taylor praising the achievements of Bethlehem University but underlining the continuing threat to freedom of education for Palestinians.

Religious Freedom in the Holy Land

Freedom of education is only one of the many fundamental human freedoms regularly threatened by Israeli policies. Despite the oft-heard claim that Israel is 'the only democracy in the Middle East', it seems it has a somewhat idiosyncratic understanding of religious freedom. Since March 1993, Palestinians have been unable to visit Jerusalem. This means that whereas pilgrims and tourists from all over the world have been free to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Aqsa Mosque, Palestinian Christians and Muslims

with West Bank or Gaza IDs have been unable to do so.

A further example of commitment to religious freedom hit the headlines recently when Christian representatives from the Holy Land were harassed on their way to the airport to attend the three-faith meeting at Lambeth at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. This meeting was called specifically to further the cause of peace in the Holy Land by establishing common ground between Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

The Anglican Bishop, Bishop Riah Abu Al Assal and his colleague, Bishop Munib Younan of the Lutheran Church in Jerusalem, were stopped at a road block and asked to get out of the car and submit to a search. Bishop Riah refused and asked the soldiers to check their orders with their superiors. Eventually they were allowed to proceed to the airport.

Archbishop Boutros Mouallem and Father Elias Chacour of the Greek Catholic Church from The Galilee experienced similar humiliation. At the airport all four were asked to identify and open their baggage before the flight. When they refused, Archbishop Mouallem was asked to prove he was a bishop, and to step into a private room for interrogation. Eventually, after top level intervention the party was allowed to leave on a later flight.

Father Chacour said that the archbishop, who carries a Vatican passport, had never experienced such humiliation: 'Every non-Jew is seen as a potential enemy ... We want to be friends with the Israelis and build bridges between our communities but it is becoming very difficult. We either build this state together or it won't be built.' 'Unless they can overcome their paranoia, their feeling that they are victims, there will never be peace.' Pointedly Bishop Munib asked. 'If we are treated this way how do they treat normal Palestinian Christians?'

Another little-known feature of Israel's interpretation of Religious Freedom is the law prohibiting proselytising or conversion. From December 1977, it has been an offence punishable by up to five years' imprisonment to attempt to persuade an Israeli to change his or her religion. The convert in turn is liable to up to three years' imprisonment. The Law prohibits the offer of any 'material inducement' to a person to convert. Apparently the gift of a Bible would constitute such a 'material inducement'. Christians were reassured at the time that the law applied equally to all religions and was not aimed at Christians, as though this militated less against any genuine commitment to the right to religious Freedom as understood in the charter of the United Nations: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; *this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief*, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.'

In any case it is clear that the law had Christianity clearly in its sights and is directed at the phenomenon of Jews converting to Christianity. Certainly we await with interest its application to the case of any non-Jew converting to Judaism.

FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALEXANDRIA DECLARATION

Lambeth Palace
25 October 2002

Alexandria meeting establishes ten-point plan

First, we affirm the first Alexandria Declaration, celebrating its respect for the three major religious traditions of the region, underscoring its rejection of violence, incitement to hatred and misrepresentation, cherishing its call for a just, secure and durable solution for the Holy Land and support for a religiously sanctioned ceasefire; and promoting its ambition to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

Second, we commit ourselves to discuss the issues presented by the occupation and the ongoing violence.

From the Palestinian side it has been underlined that the ending of occupation, the withdrawal to the borders of 1967, the alleviation of the suffering of their people and the establishment of a strong, viable Palestinian state are preconditions for a peaceful future for all peoples living in the Holy Land.

From the Israeli side it has been underlined that the end of violence and the open acceptance of their presence in a Jewish state in the Holy Land are fundamental to the attainment of peace.

We acknowledge the fear of communities that there will never be open acceptance by the other of their right to be present in the Holy Land and believe that all have a duty to combat the mistrust that this generates.

Third, we recognised that it is essential to work together to establish a better understanding across the divides; to find ways of enabling each to see the common problems afresh, with the eyes of the other.

Fourth, as a sign of our ability to trust each other and work together, we believe that establishing the freedom for the faithful to worship each in their holy places should be a visible outworking of our commitment.

In looking to the future, we recognised the fundamental importance of ensuring that what we say of one another is free from invective and rhetoric and is not cast in stereotypes or generalisations. We need also to ensure that what is passed on to the next generation is not wrapped in fear and mistrust.

Therefore we, the members of the Alexandria Permanent Committee condemn all and any derogatory remarks directed to the faith, tenets and/or central figures of any of our faiths. Such remarks undermine our efforts and commitments to advance peace between our communities and, in their very character, do harm both to the faith defamed and the very religion in whose name they are made.

We call upon all responsible religious leaders to emphasise the essential need to demonstrate respect and dignity towards other faiths and their attachments for the sake of

peace in the Middle East and the world at large and for the glory of the one Creator and Lord of the Universe.

We take this opportunity, on the eve of Ramadan, to greet the Islamic world in peace as they prepare for their Holy season.

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We acknowledge with gratitude the central role played in our deliberations by the leadership of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, the support of His Eminence Dr Said Tantawy, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and the enormous contributions of the Centre for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral.

Signatories included: Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey; Sephardi Chief Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi-Doron; Deputy Foreign Minister Rabbi Michael Melchior; President of the World Conference on Religion and Peace Rabbi David Rosen; Minister of State for the Palestinian Authority Sheikh Tal El Sider on behalf of the Palestinian delegation; a representative of the Greek Patriarch Archbishop Aristichos; Melkite Archbishop Boutros Mouallem; and Bishop Riah Abu El-Assal of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East.

25 October 2002

The ten points are:

1. To maintain the relationship and channels of communication developed from the Alexandria Declaration;
2. To increase local ownership of the Alexandria Declaration implementation process;
3. To establish an inter-religious council for Jerusalem and the Holy sites;
4. To sustain the existing close working relationships with the political leadership of both the Government of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority;
5. To engage with those religious leaders who are seen to be instruments in the perpetuation of violence;
6. To establish and set in motion clear channels of communication with the Quartet;
7. To establish a program of education—through religious institutions—that will foster and encourage an environment of tolerance and eventual reconciliation;
8. To systematically work through the implementation of the Alexandria Declaration;
9. To provide encouragement for the delegates to the Permanent Committee, to enable them to continue the bold work that they have started;
10. To engage with other nations of the Middle East region, at the highest level.

ANTIZIONISM EQUALS ANTISEMITISM?*

Michael Prior, C.M.

Virtually as soon as the State of Israel begins to be criticised for its behaviour towards the Palestinians one notices two developments in the West: an immediate increase in the number of media outlets portraying aspects of the *Shoah*—the Nazi's 'Final Solution to the Jewish Problem'—and the resurfacing of the charge of 'antisemitism', directed against critics of Israel's behaviour. While these recurring tendencies are the products of a range of emotions that run deeper than logic they do lock into two common misunderstandings.

The State of Israel is frequently portrayed as simply 'the Jewish response to the *Shoah*.' Thus, the Nazis' horrors prove that Zionism was justified, and Zionist Jews—many Jews are anti-Zionist, post-Zionist, or just tired of the whole business—and the Israelis justify the displacement of the indigenous Palestinians, and exculpate Israel of virtually any maltreatment of the remaining Palestinians. The eccentric nature of such an interpretation of morality, held by even some of the most liberal Israelis, somehow escapes serious analysis.

Secondly, even while being the perpetrator of a gross and ongoing injustice on the indigenous Palestinians, Israel presents itself as an innocent victim above reproach. When criticised, Israelis, then, are casualties of perennial, ubiquitous and irridentist antisemitism. To offset even the most timid Catholic criticism, the saga of 'the Christian contempt of Judaism', and the allegedly despicable performance of Pius XII during the Second World War are played over, again and again.

Zionism: A Substitute for Judaism

It is, however, self-deluding for Israelis and their supporters to conclude that criticism of Israel is mostly a manifestation of Jew-hatred, or that Israel is being singled out simply because it is a Jewish state. It is also naïve to present Political Zionism as a response to the *Shoah*, and it is less than honest to equate Zionism with either Judaism or Jewry. It is important to situate the birth of Zionism in its historical context. This reveals its secular, indeed anti-religious nature, evoking virtually universal condemnation from the rabbis, as well as its transparently colonialist nature.

In *Der Judenstaat* (1896)—more appropriately translated 'the state for Jews', to distinguish it from the implications of a Jewish state (*Jüdischer Staat*)—Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) outlined his Political Zionism, and provided the major ideological drive to establish the state for Jews. Herzlian Zionism was a secular ideology from its inception. Herzl had no sense of Jewish culture and no attachment to Judaism. Indeed, while in Vienna in 1881-82, he had considered even mass Jewish conversion to Catholicism as a solution to the problem of being a Jew in Europe. By 1895 he had lost all hope that Jews would ever be fully assimilated into European society, and judged the efforts to combat antisemitism to be futile.

Herzl insisted that Jews world-wide constituted one people and a 'distinctive nationality', whose problem could be solved only through the 'restoration' of the Jewish state. Just as 'Pan-Germanism' proclaimed that everyone of German race, blood or descent, owed their primary loyalty to the homeland, so Jews, wherever they lived, constituted a distinct nation, whose welfare could be advanced only through establishing a Jewish nation-state, preferably in Palestine.

His project immediately ran into opposition from the religious establishment, being perceived as a conscious repudiation of the most fundamental tenets of Judaism. For Orthodox Jews the diaspora was a condition ordained by God, who alone would bring it to an end. That the Zionist movement would arrogate to itself the agency for the *restoration* of the Jewish people to its ancestral land—uniquely the task of the Messiah—was sheer blasphemy. Reform Judaism, for its part, viewing Jewish history as evolutionary, rejected the notion that Jews outside Palestine were 'in exile', insisting that Jews constituted a religious community, rather than a nation, and were citizens of many states.

Zionism was not merely a variant on the Jewish faith, but a very substitute for it. Herzl and his Zionism were anathema to the most influential eastern European rabbis. In the West, his own Chief Rabbi in Vienna, Moritz Güdemann, objected that the Jews were not a nation, and that Zionism was incompatible with Judaism. Similarly France's Grand Rabbin, Zadok Kahn, protested. The German Rabbinical Council publicly condemned the efforts of 'the so-called Zionists' to create a Jewish national state in Palestine as contrary to Holy Writ. Belgium's Grand Rabbin, M A Bloch, also protested, describing Zionist aspirations as far from those of Judaism. The Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth, Hermann Adler, who had received Herzl in London, viewed his programme as an 'egregious blunder' and an 'absolutely mischievous project.' He considered the Zionist movement to be opposed to the teaching of Judaism.

The Zionist movement was considered to be a rebellion against classical Judaism, and with good reason. For political Zionists, religion was irrational, and a repressive and regressive force. For them, salvation lay in escaping from the prison of the sacred, and the hypnotic spell of the Bible. Judaism was a weight of lead attached to the feet of Jews. For such people, religion was a symptom of Jewry's sickness in exile. Zionist Palestine would be new, secular, and qualitatively different from the past of the diaspora.

Agudat Yisrael, formed in Germany in 1912 to present a united Orthodox front, in the face of the dangers posed by secularisation, assimilation and Herzlian Jewish nationalism was consistently opposed to Zionism because of its arrogating to itself the divine initiative. It considered Zionism to be a pseudo-messianic, satanic conspiracy against God whose responsibility alone it was to gather in the Jews. Moreover, Zionism was bent on removing from Jewish communal life the religious values which had united Jews down the ages. Zionism, then, strove to protect Jewish life, while abandoning

* This paper first appeared in *Doctrine and Life* 52 (July-August 2002), and is reproduced with the kind permission of the editor.

the values which had sustained it. The abandonment of what was most characteristically Jewish in the pursuit of purely secular, nineteenth-century European notions of nationhood, was, for them, the ultimate form of assimilation.

Although thoroughly despised as an aspiration by mainstream Orthodox and Reform Judaism until the 1930s and 40s, Zionism, even in its most expansionist and imperialist form, now has virtually unquestioning support in mainstream religious Jewish circles, especially in the wake of the 'miraculous victory' of the 1967 Israeli-Arab war. For many religious Jews, formerly secular, anti-religious Zionism has been metamorphosed and even clothed in the garments of piety. Thus, the late Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, Immanuel Jakobovits, could claim that the origins of the Zionist idea were entirely religious, holding that 'The Bible is our mandate'. And more recently, Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks considers the State of Israel to be the most powerful collective expression of Jewry. Its birth was a coming to the promised land, in the line of Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Ezra and Nehemiah. The very existence of the state, he affirms, testifies to the power of hope sustained by prayer. Prayer shawls might sit somewhat uncomfortably on the shoulders of Prime Ministers Begin, Rabin, Peres, Netanyahu, Barak and Sharon.

Despite the *volte-face* of the establishment, both in Israel and abroad, religious opposition to Political Zionism has not altogether been suffocated. Although it still retains some of its ideological non-Zionism, and even anti-Zionism *Agudat Yisrael* has reached an accommodation with Political Zionism. Other more rejectionist religious groups regard the state as an abomination. For the 'ultra-Orthodox' movement—the most undefiled Jews in their own terms—hell had entered Israel with Herzl. Several communities in Israel and elsewhere hold that the state is an act of rebellion against God, because the initiative for 'ingathering' must be God's.

In particular, *Neturei Karta*, founded in Jerusalem in 1938, refuses to recognise the authority of 'the illegitimate so-called "State of Israel"'. For them, Zionism is the most pernicious movement in Jewish history. The *miraculous* event of 1967 is merely the temptation of the righteous to be lured away from authentic salvation. Unlike most participants in the debate who never consider the moral question of the impact of Political Zionism on the indigenous Palestinians, *Neturei Karta* is distressed at the injustices to the Palestinians in the name of Jewishness. It stresses that the Talmud and Midrash explicitly prohibit premature attempts to end exile, and insists that the 'pseudo religion of Zionism' is a product of the abandonment of the *Torah* and a demonising of all nations.

World Jewry, they claim, is implicated in Israel's violence against the Palestinians. Since Israel is now the most dangerous place in the world for Jews, Zionism's 'dismal failure' in solving the 'Jewish question' by 'ending exile' should be acknowledged, and this should lead to the total dismantling of the Israeli state and the transfer of sovereignty to Palestinian rule. Already too much blood has been shed on the altar of a nineteenth-century colonial nationalism, misapplied to the Jewish people. From being a people of faith, Zionism has changed Jewishness to a barren secular, ethnic identity.

True Jews, they insist, are not allowed to dominate,

kill, harm or demean another people. They deplore the systematic uprooting of ancient Jewish communities by the Zionists, and the shedding of Jewish and non-Jewish blood for the sake of Zionist sovereignty. After fifty-four years, five wars, endless terror and counter-terror, innocent civilians dead on both sides, there is, they bemoan, no solution in sight. They regard Zionism as a tragic experiment. The land belongs to those who have dwelt there for centuries. Whether the Palestinians allow a few or many Jews to maintain citizenship in their state is entirely up to them.

Despite the recent adulation of Zionism in Jewish religious circles—and that constituency has, in one of the most extraordinary ideological metamorphoses of the twentieth century, moved from castigating Zionism as an heresy to embracing it, and being its most enthusiastic supporter—it hardly appears reasonable to equate anti-Zionism with anti-Judaism. Indeed, in the estimation of some religious Jews, Zionism is the very antithesis of Judaism.¹

The Original Sin of Zionism: Ethnic-Cleansing

The religious discourse invariably is an exclusively inner-Jewish one, scarcely moving beyond discussing 'what is good, or bad, for the Jews'. There is inescapably, however, a fundamental moral problem at the core of the Zionist programme which no amount of special pleading, or pretence to innocence, can side-step. This relates to the Zionist determination to establish a state for Jews at the expense of the indigenous Arabs. This resolve, of course, was contrary to the basic assumption of European nationalisms, that the community/nation desiring independence from the imperial power was indigenous to the relevant territory. In Herzl's day, Jews constituted less than five per cent of the population of Palestine. Herzl's claim to construct a state 'like every other nation', then, involved special pleading, of colonial proportions.

In line with stereotypical colonialist prejudices, Herzl dismissed the impact of his plans on the indigenous people. He knew what was needed to establish a state for Jews in a land already inhabited. An entry in his diary of 12 June 1895 signals his plans. Having occupied the land and expropriated the private property, 'We shall endeavour to expel the poor population across the border unnoticed, procuring employment for it in the transit countries, but denying it any employment in our own country.' He added that both 'the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly'.

Moreover, there is a 'mountain' of evidence in the Zionist archives tracing the consistency of this line of thinking within the Jewish leadership in Palestine. It demonstrates that the expulsion of the indigenous Arabs was foreseen as necessary, was systematically planned and was executed at the first opportunity, in 1948. From it we learn in detail how prominent

¹ In my *Zionism and the State of Israel: A Moral Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 67-102, I trace the metamorphosis of the religious estimation of Political Zionism, from being an anathema, to occupying a position of virtual sacred significance within religious Jewish thinking.

A Way Forward

was the necessity of 'transfer' in the thinking of the Zionist leadership from the middle 1930s, at least. We read of the establishment and compartment of the two 'Population Transfer Committees' (1937 through 1944) and the third Population Transfer Committee established by the Israeli cabinet in August 1948.² The damage done to the indigenous population, then, was neither accidental nor due to the unique pressures of war, but was at the heart of the Zionist enterprise from the beginning. The Zionist archives themselves, then, fundamentally undermine the Zionist pretence that its intentions were altogether innocent, if not indeed altruistic. They demonstrate that the imperative to 'transfer' the indigenous Arab population was at the very core of the Zionist enterprise from the beginning, and was pursued with determination.

The establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948 was preceded and followed by systematic expulsion of 80 per cent of the Arab population of what became the state, the destruction of 418 of their villages, to ensure they would not return, and the confiscation of virtually all their land—Jews owned only some 6.6 per cent of Palestine before 1948, but, through the application of various 'legal' enactments owned practically all of it within a short time. Of the some 750,000 Arabs expelled in 1948 some 50,000 were Christians, representing 35 per cent of all Christians who lived in Palestine prior to 15 May 1948. For the Palestinians, the Zionist War of Independence was their *Nakba* (catastrophe). Israel's colonisation policy after the 1967 war has added to Palestinian disaffection to this day.

Palestinians and neighbouring Arab peoples, of course, have most reason to be aggrieved, but outsiders also have reasons for disaffection. This is particularly true of Christians who, at best, are expected either to support the Zionist conquest, even hailing it to be a miraculous act of God, and a victory for freedom and civilised values, or, at least, to remain silent about Israel's behaviour. However, Zionists' failure to 'come clean' on their ethnic-cleansing imperative, and Israel's failure to conform to UN Resolutions and an array of Human Rights Protocols is sufficient to shock many.

The 'canonical' Zionist version of history, of course, plays down, ignores, explains away, denies, or exonerates Zionists of any responsibility for the destruction of Arab Palestinian life. Even the late Chief Rabbi Jakobovits, a distinguished commentator on other aspects of morality, whose conscience was constantly perturbed by the Arab refugee problem, was quick to assert that 'we (*sic!*) are neither responsible for their being there nor have a solution for their problems.' Again, while Chief Rabbi Sacks recalls with sadness the twenty thousand who died so that Israel should exist, he spares no thought for the Arabs of Palestine and the surrounding states who have paid an even more severe price for the prize of Zionism. Instead, we learn that the Jewish pioneers created farms and forests out of a barren landscape.

While Palestine has always been a mosaic transcending ethnic, religious, and national separations—*pace* the biblical legend's embrace of the genocide of the indigenous Canaanites—the *Zeitgeist* since Oslo (1993) has abandoned the presumption of ethnic and political diversity. Imagination, generosity of spirit, courage, and a certain amount of moral thinking are required if Israel-Palestine is to move beyond the all too predictable politics of separation.

Why must the future settle for an arrangement which feeds off the jaded rhetoric of racist and colonialist nineteenth-century Europe? Why should the Jewish people bind itself inexorably to a controlling ideology which predicates hermetically-sealed separateness as the utopian solution to neighbourliness? The aspiration to a secular bi-national state in the whole of Palestine, espoused by the PLO until 1988, has now also devolved into the option for separation, with two states side by side.

On the surface it might appear that one was dealing with two deeply-rooted, fundamentally irreconcilable nationalist aspirations. The reality, however, is that each of the nationalisms is of recent origin—the late nineteenth-century in the case of Jewish nationalism, and, while the seeds were sown earlier, 1967 in the case of a distinctly Palestinian nationalism. Moreover, the two are not only recourses of desperation, but betray poverty of vision, lack of imagination and moral determination.

The bi-national option within a unitary state has more to commend it in the long run. The formation of a unitary, secular, non-racial state in Mandated Palestine, with equal rights for both peoples (including returned expulsees), and all religions, as in other democracies, would be a bold solution. To achieve it, the essentially discriminatory base and structure of Zionism would have to be dismantled, and Israelis' national goals would have to become inclusive. While not satisfying all nationalist or religious aspirations, a unitary state in Palestine beats throwing the Jews into the sea, or throwing the Palestinian Arabs into the desert. Could it ever happen?

James Diamond considered it as unlikely that Israel would disavow or move beyond Zionism as that the USA would renounce democracy or capitalism, or Russia would forsake Marxism or communism—he was writing in 1986.³ Since then, the Berlin Wall also has collapsed, South African *Apartheid* has been dismantled, and an agreed settlement in Northern Ireland is almost there. Two separated states is probably the only viable option for the moment, moving perhaps later to a federation of two states with permeable borders, and ultimately to a unified state.

Herzlian Zionism as implemented by Israel since its foundation, and by Ariel Sharon currently is hardly a moral option for Jewry. Disdain for Zionism's exclusivist, oppressive, imperialistic and colonialist essence should not be dismissed as an expression of irridentist hatred of either Jews or Judaism. It should be welcomed as pointing to the necessity of making a better moral future.

² See Nur Masalha's *Expulsion of the Palestinians: the Concept of 'Transfer' in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), his *A Land without a People. Israel, Transfer and the Palestinians 1949-96* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), and his *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians: The Politics of Expansion, 1967-2000* (London: Pluto, 2000).

³ James S Diamond, *Homeland or Holy Land? The 'Canaanite Critique of Israel* (Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 126-27.

VOICES FROM THE HOLY LAND

From the letter to from the Church Leaders in Jerusalem to Mr Colin Powell

Justice and peace must kiss each other. (Psalm 85: 10)

We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem, representing the four families of churches (Greek Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical (Anglicans and Lutheran) are very concerned about the present situation in Palestine and Israel, and about this very difficult time in our history. We write you this letter expressing our appreciation for the American administration and for its role in trying to solve the Israeli/ Palestinian conflict along with the European Union, Norway and Russia.

At the same time we plead with you as Christian leaders, who are concerned about both Palestinians and Israelis and with the future of their children, to help both sides equally implement peace and justice.

As we meet you in Jerusalem, we would like to share with you our vision in which we want both nations to live in their own state, equally, equitably, justly and peacefully, so that both nations will be a blessing for the Middle East and for the world. The peace of the world is dependent upon the peace of Jerusalem.

The Conflict between Israel and Palestine

We want to express the symbiotic relationship between the Israelis and Palestinians in this land. We want security for the Israelis and justice and freedom for the Palestinians. We see that security of Israel is dependent upon justice for the Palestinians.

The Arab population in the region and elsewhere are nowadays hostile to Israel because of the Palestinian cause. Since the Palestinian cause is the core problem of the Middle East conflict, the Arab world will become friendly with Israel once it is solved in a just way, accepting Israel's existence in the Middle East. But in order to get to that point, justice must be implemented according to international legitimacy as represented by UN resolutions 242, 338, and 1397, which call for a political solution. This means that the principle of land for peace ought to be implemented. The Israeli occupation in all its forms must end and Arab land must be returned so the State of Palestine can exist within the 1967 borders. The Israeli settlements must be dismantled, the Palestinian right of return must be fairly addressed and there must be a shared Jerusalem for the two peoples. All forms of violence and counter-violence will end when a political solution is implemented and guaranteed by the United States and the European countries.

The Palestinian/Israeli conflict is not a mere question of violence. Violence is only a symptom of the root cause of the Middle East conflict, namely, the Israeli occupation of 1967 territories. The Palestinians today are satisfied to have

their own state within the 1967 borders which amounts to 5000 square kilometres of the historic Palestine. Continuing to address only the question of violence will keep us all, Palestinians and Israelis, in an indefinite circle of violence. Enough blood has been shed from both sides. It is time now to start a new era of just peace and mutual recognition of each other's human, civil, religious and political rights.

The Interfaith Dialogue among Jews, Christians and Muslims will continue to be a tool for peace education and a catalyst for reconciliation. This process has started in the Alexandria Declaration in January 2002, and was supported by the local, regional and international religious and political leadership.

The Present Situation of Conflict, Suffering and Death

We believe that all kinds of military attacks and operations and spiral violence ought to be stopped immediately. Churches and mosques have not been spared by the Israeli military forces. A total ceasefire must be immediately declared on both sides to understand what Prophet Zechariah said: 'Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.'

This means there must be a total withdrawal of the Israeli army without any delay from the re-occupied Palestinian territories, as President Bush said, easing the life of Palestinians in their daily lives and work, and at the Israeli checkpoints. At the same time a parallel political negotiation must take place immediately.

We still see that Mr. Arafat is the elected president and the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and he is the only one who can deliver the peace agreement in this period of history.

At this time we strongly believe that international protection must be imposed in order to secure the lives of the people.

A Dream of Peace

Mr Secretary, we have represented Christianity in this part of the world for the last two thousand years. We believe that the future of Palestinian Christianity is also in peace and not in war. We believe that the Christian Church can be an instrument of peace, justice and reconciliation. As Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., said, 'I have a dream.' Our dream is that these two peoples who represent the three monotheistic religions may live in just peace and freedom, in security and reconciliation.

This letter is signed by the Patriarchs, Bishops and other leaders of the Jerusalem Churches

The Divine Light Still Burns: The Holy Land Christians Endure

Speech by the Latin Patriarch to the Conference of the Ecumenical Christian Foundation in the US

'The divine light still burns. The Holy Land Christians endure'. Yes, the divine light is there, and therefore we endure. Indeed, we keep hoping because we believe firmly in God. He is the Almighty, the stronger than any power in this world. We believe, with the Psalmist, that 'He will judge the world in uprightness, and He will give a true verdict on the nations' (Ps 9-10:8-9). We believe that He is 'a stronghold for the oppressed, in times of trouble' (Ps 9-10:10-11). We believe in His love and justice, and therefore the divine light still burns, and the Holy Land Christians endure. They hope, and they say to God: 'Rise up, O God, raise your hand; do not forget the afflicted' (Ps 10: 12); in your saving justice, lead me (Ps 5:8); it is you, and none other, who make rest secure (Ps 4:8).

With this faith, we look to the tragedy of the people in our land, and we look at it as holy land, full of the memory of God's history with humankind, beginning with Abraham, the father of our faith, all of us, Jews, Moslems and Christians. Our land is full of the memory of God. But, in these difficult days, we ask ourselves whether God is still present there, not in the land, but in the living hearts of the believers in Him, because what is happening today is so inhuman, it cannot be coming from people who believe in God. We look to the land, to the occupation, to the resistance to the occupation, and to the infernal cycle of violence, which encircle the daily life of so many human beings, among whom we find the small Christian Palestinian community.

We look to the land and to its tragedy, and we look to our Christian identity and to our role in sharing in these sufferings and in contributing to their healing. Our Christian identity is still not clearly defined to so many who suffer the tragedy of the land, who endure the curfews, the siege, the demolitions, and the humiliation which compels them to ask for their bread. At the same time, neither is it clearly defined to many directly engaged in the political and human struggle that calls for the end of the occupation and a new birth of freedom.

First feature of our identity is to be one, though and because we are many and divided. We are many Churches in Jerusalem, we have our differences and divisions, but we are called to be one, beyond differences and divisions. One heart, one vision of the human being to whom we are sent to serve him in his difficult days. When human beings are suffering, as they are today in the Holy Land, Christian Churches are not allowed to paralyze their action and their message because of their divisions. Overcoming in love our divisions to serve, to listen to the cry of the oppressed and the poor, will be remunerated by God one day with the gift of unity that is the true desire of all of us and with the gift of justice and peace.

Therefore ecumenism is also a special vocation of this Foundation. It is a foundation for all the Christians emigrated from the Church of Jerusalem. Every Christian should feel at home in this Foundation. No one of us should try to appropriate it for himself. It should remain the place where

all Christians meet, reflect and act, as true witnesses to Jesus Christ in His land.

First and essential feature also is the belonging to one's people. Any Christian is part of his people wherever he is. Therefore, Christian Palestinians are part of their people in all their trials, sufferings and in paying the price to recover their land and their freedom. At the same time, even as they belong to the land and cling to it with all their might, even as they make claims for justice and suffer for it, Christian Palestinians believe in Jesus Christ, in his love and justice. Jesus, the Lord, embodies values that can make a special contribution to the human resolution of our ongoing tragedy. He has a spirit that can enrich the Palestinians as they claim their freedom and their land. An essential element of the Christian Palestinian identity, therefore, is our faith in Jesus Christ and all his teachings, lived with authenticity.

Some people would like to treat Christian Palestinians as if they were exclusively a religious community without membership in any other human belonging to a people. They would deny our ethnicity and our nationality. Ethnic and national identity is a good in which we all share. Our Christian identity does not detract from our belonging to the Palestinian people. The universality of the Church does not dissolve our Palestinian heritage or destroy our nationality. The Church is a communion that embraces and affirms all nations, races and cultures. We Palestinians are one human community, one people, in which Christians and Moslems are united.

In our ties to the land and to the people, and in the struggle for land and freedom, Christian-Muslim relations are often put to the test by a very malicious temptation. It says: Moslems do not respect Christians; they do not allow them the necessary space for life; they are a danger and a source of fear to the Christians, and so on. Doing so is no help at all to Christian Palestinians. It is rather an invitation to them to live in fear and to abandon their land and their vocation in it. Moslem-Christian relations are very intimate bonds between two parts of the same people. Only the people themselves can handle the huge, continuous efforts needed to find the best way to coexistence and collaboration. This relationship is an essential part of the Christian life in any Arab country and Moslem society. It is a basic feature of our Arab and Palestinian Christian identity: to live in an Arab and Moslem world is our vocation.

Since the 11th of September, relations between Moslems and Christians came to the surface in a very acute way. With the eruption of irrational terrorism, a new historical moment has begun, in which humankind is invited to a true purification of historical memories and of present relations. Acknowledging one's own sin and hence the true sources and causes of evil is difficult. In this historical moment Arab Christians are called to purify their comprehension of their intimate relations with their Moslems co-nationals in order to help Christians and Moslems in the world come together to build the new world. Our vocation to live among and with Moslems is a gift to all peoples.

In the building of a new world, Palestinian freedom and a Palestinian state must be a part. The present situation has been reduced to a military confrontation, a blind demolition of men and things. We are living nowadays a very cruel military stalemate that profits no one. The Israelis who

continue to live in fear for their security are no safer, and Palestinians who continue to struggle for their freedom and independence are still claiming for it.

The situation in the Holy Land could be very simple, but politics blinds us to its simplicity. The essence of the conflict is the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land taken in 1967. Instead of the Israeli occupation, what the world speaks about now is the fight against terrorism, the corruption of the Palestinian administration, and the needed reforms to set it right. These are real problems, but they are not the main problem. Indeed, suppose that all Palestinian violence stop and the best Palestinian administration is found, even then the conflict will not be resolved, because the basic problem will remain unaddressed: Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and Palestinian claims for independence and freedom. As long as these basic claims are not satisfied, violence and insecurity will continue to shake the land.

The military violence that is going on now—siege, curfews, home demolition, the killing of Palestinians, as well as killing of Israelis—is simply another unfortunate and useless chapter in the tragic history of our land. That chapter will be closed one day with the horrible sum of the victims, the ruins and the hatred on both sides. So much bloodshed and hatred on both sides could have been spared, if there were more courage, and more sincerity, to look into the essential question of occupation. The bloodshed and the hatred can be ended, if all sides would only take the decision to put an end to it. Then both peoples will have been saved, and will have begun the process of reconciliation. The present policy of military solution adopted by the Israeli government is a waste of time and a dreadful waste of lives. It is a cruel and useless parenthesis in the history of this long conflict.

The present route in the pursuit of peace and security is misguided. It is time to learn from the lessons of history and from the victims of these two past years. We have matched violence against violence; we have buried victim upon victim, and we have succeeded only in marching backwards. Israelis live in fear and are desperate for security. Palestinians live under occupation and long for their freedom. During these two past years, thousands of Palestinians were killed, thousands were made prisoners, besides demolitions of houses and agriculture. If the same military situation remains, more thousands will be killed or made prisoners, more demolition will take place. But the whole question will remain as it is: the Palestinian people claiming for his freedom and for the end of the Israeli occupation, and the Israeli people claiming for their security. It is time to change. It is time for the Israelis to give themselves the needed security by allowing the Palestinians enjoy their legitimate freedom.

The Foundation has as its basic aim to create a new living Christian community among all those who left the land, in solidarity with the churches of their new lands, especially here in the United States. In order to rekindle the light of the land in their hearts and doings, in order to help those who are there keep hoping in these difficult days, the Foundation has also to make grow the authentic Christian contribution to the healing of the land. I wish to this Foundation a real success in achieving its noble and needed goals

in these days. We need unity, we need common and more coordinated action, for the good of those who are here and those who bear the weight of their vocation there. I thank you for the invitation to be with you this evening; and to all of you I wish all the blessings of the Lord, with the peace and justice that will heal all the wounds of our land.

*The Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah to the Holy Land
Christian Ecumenical Foundation, Washington, DC,
18 October 2002*

The Housing project at Beit Sahour

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem follows with great interest and concern the events related to the Greek Orthodox Housing Project in the Municipality of Beit Sahour following the decision of the Israeli authorities for the demolition of 100 residences erected within the framework of this project in land owned by the Patriarchate.

The Patriarchate, while remaining loyal to its 2,000-year old tradition not to involve in political disputes, is pursuing with dedication its two main endeavours, that is the preservation and maintenance of the Holy shrines in the Holy Land and the ministry of its congregation's needs, so as to ensure the protection and continuation of the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

Bearing in mind the need of the Greek Orthodox community in Beit Sahour for low-cost housed for the young generation, the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate, in 1995, offered its congregation, with a long-term lease agreement, 20 donums, located within the municipal borders of the Beit Sahour Municipality.

By the time of order of the demolition, the construction of the residences was almost completed due to sacrifices of the population to gather the necessary funds, despite the serious economic difficulties that the region has been facing during the past turbulent years. The surprise, frustration, pain and agony of these people, who are the spiritual children of the Patriarchate, is understandable and shared by all the Greek Orthodox communities. The Patriarchate will spare no efforts and legal means to support all protect its spiritual children and their livelihoods in Beit Sahour at this moment of trial.

We appeal to all people of good faith, irrespective of race or religion, to support the efforts of the Patriarchate to protect and preserve the living testimony of the Christian presence in the birthplace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We also appeal to competent Israeli authorities to reconsider their decision for the demolition of the houses and not to inflict unnecessary and inhuman pain and despair on the families concerned.

Finally, we raise our prayers to the Lord that reconciliation and mercy, peace and justice will finally prevail in His Holy Land, for the sake of all its inhabitants, the present and the future generation.

*Press Release from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
Jerusalem, Tuesday, October 15 2002.*

PART 2
PATTERNS OF PILGRIMAGE
CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE FROM THE ARAB CONQUEST UNTIL
TODAY

Duncan Macpherson

The first part of this article identified four elements in Christian Pilgrimage to the Holy Land: the historical imagination, devotional imagination, the liturgical and the political. I argued that each of these four elements, either singly or in combination with any of the other elements could characterise pilgrimage to the Holy Land in any one historical period.

**Christian Pilgrimage under Arab,
 Crusader and Ottoman Rule**

With the coming of Islam in 638 Christian pilgrimage persisted, but from the Ikshidid Dynasty (915–969) onwards, lapses in the previously generally tolerant attitude of Muslim rulers reduced the numbers of pilgrims considerably. Such pilgrims as came to the Holy Land were inspired chiefly by a powerfully devotional emphasis making them ready to risk persecution and danger. The persecution of Christians and the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre by the Fatimid Caliph ‘Hakim the Mad’ in 1009 proved a crisis point that provoked preparations for the Crusades. In 1099 the Crusaders took Jerusalem and established Western Christian hegemony over the region until their first loss of Jerusalem in 1187 and their final expulsion from the region, after the fall of Acre, in 1291. During this period Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land was clearly dominated by a combination of militant Christian devotion and a desire for political and military control.¹

During the Crusader period interest in the historical also re-emerged. Old shrines were restored and new shrines were ‘discovered’ providing new homiletic and liturgical opportunities. Following the western custom, since Mass would be celebrated daily and not be limited to Sundays and feast days, pilgrims might assist at Mass at all of these shrines. Although preaching was not a regular or even a frequent feature of mediaeval worship, Latin bishops and the members of preaching orders could now hone their homiletic skills and motivate the troops in these shrines although such preaching might also be quite independent of the Eucharist. Long before this, the developing divisions in the Church had already distanced visiting pilgrims from the indigenous

Christian communities but under Crusader rule the liturgical celebrations of the large numbers of new pilgrims were of the alien Latin rite which the Crusader Kings tried to impose upon the local Church.

After the initial post-Crusader persecution and the destruction of many pilgrimage sites Mamluk rulers and, later, the Ottomans, permitted the Franciscans to have custody of many of the Holy Places. The indigenous Christians were largely either ‘Greek’ or non-Chalcedonian Orthodox whereas a large number of the pilgrims were Latin Catholics. It was the Franciscans who catered for these pilgrims by caring for existing shrines and ‘discovering’ new ones and by maintaining liturgical functions at these sites. In the fifteenth century, for example, the friars set up and thus made possible ‘preaching’ of ‘The Stations of the Cross’ in Jerusalem.

In due course Orthodox pilgrims, particularly Russian pilgrims, revived and extended their own characteristic liturgical institutions in the Holy Land. Helped by improved transport and encouraged by the Russian State, Orthodox pilgrimage reached its height by the end of the nineteenth century.² Most important among the features of Orthodox pilgrimage was attendance at the Holy Week and Easter Liturgies in Jerusalem. In addition, there was the ritual bathing in the River Jordan. This included many of the ceremonies associated with baptism, including the reception of a white garment subsequently laid on the ‘Stone of Anointing’ in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and taken home, to serve eventually as the pilgrim’s shroud.

For these Russian pilgrims the spiritual and liturgical elements of pilgrimage would have been paramount. Such preaching as might have been included would probably have been little more than exposition of the rituals. Certainly the historical dimension was a matter of complete irrelevance.³

By contrast, English Protestant pilgrimages were concerned with little apart from the historical. With biblical certainties under fire from historical criticism and the rising

¹ It can be argued that this combination of the devotional and the political-military elements was also present in earlier Byzantine adventures aiming to recover Byzantine control of the Holy Land, the *ersatz* crusade of Tzimisces in 975 being the best example. Historical evidence concerning the precise purpose and execution of this ‘Crusade’ is disputed however. (Regan, Geoffrey 2001: *First Crusade, Byzantium’s Holy Wars*. London: Sutton, pp. 208–216).

² ‘Throughout history the Russian peasants had travelled to Jerusalem, usually walking the whole way. What changed in the nineteenth century was the development of “cheap” mass transport and a government policy to encourage pilgrimage.’ (Hummel, Ruth and Thomas Hummel. 1995. *Patterns of the Sacred. English Protestant and Russian Orthodox Pilgrims of the Nineteenth Century*. London: Scorpion Cavendish), p. 43.

³ ‘The Russian pilgrims expected the Holy Land to be like the Jerusalem pictured in the divine liturgy and in their icons’ and ‘... the Life Giving Tomb is not a mere geographical spot but a place of cosmic significance. The world of divine reality broke in at this spot and the structure of reality—its ontological nature—was altered forever’ (Hummel, 52 and 53).

tide of historical rationalism, concern with the possibility that archaeology might confirm the truth of Scripture produced a new form of pilgrimage as lecture-tour. For the less academically inclined it could be experienced as a devotional evocation of the life and times of Jesus. Travelling in the cultural bubble provided by the Thomas Cook travel agency, the English pilgrims were totally isolated from contact with the local populace or from the strange practices of Orthodox or Catholic Christians.

As with the Russian pilgrimages, these English pilgrimages were fuelled by improvements in communications and by the scramble for influence in this crucial corner of the crumbling Ottoman Empire. French ambitions in this regard led to the revival of the Latin Patriarchate and to an increase in Roman Catholic pilgrimages. In due course these acquired some of the qualities of the English Protestant pilgrimages with the significant difference that for the Catholic pilgrims Mass and a devotional homily at the holy places were an essential element in the experience. To this end the Church authorised appropriate readings for use at the altars provided at every shrine in the care of the Franciscan *Custos*. To the extent that the Mass and the readings commemorated the event associated with the site the homilies preached could be expected to resonate with the readings more often than they would have done at home, particularly before the liturgical reforms of Vatican II.

Clearly, celebration of the Eucharist and other liturgies at the holy sites offer considerable opportunities for more liturgically grounded preaching and the concern with history and geography, 'the world behind the text', can inform the pilgrims' understanding of the Gospel message. However such material alone cannot dictate the direction of the preaching. One or more hermeneutical perspective needs to be selected that will take account of 'the world in front of the text'. This world includes the religious, social and political realities of the Holy Land itself. Important among these is the indigenous Christian community of the Holy Land that bears its full share in the political and cultural conflicts and trials of living in Israel/Palestine. As we have seen, foreign pilgrims and native Christians have had less and less to do with each other from the time of the Crusades onwards. Liturgical and social sharing between visiting pilgrim groups and local Arabic speaking congregations can be a source of solidarity for the local

congregations and a conduit of understanding for the pilgrims. Such interchange can find both inspiration and expression in liturgical shared experience of preaching.

Living Stones, seeks to build bridges between Christians in Britain and Christians in the Holy Land and neighbouring countries. Founded in 1986, our organisation was inspired by the preaching of a charismatic Palestinian preacher of Gandhian stature, Abuna Elias Chacour of Ibillin, a village in the Galilee.⁴ Presiding at the Melkite Liturgy to a congregation which included a group from the College where I taught, he preached on the Gospel text 'He is risen, he is not here ... behold he goes before you into Galilee.'⁵

His theme was that sharing the Eucharist with the living stones of the Galilee where Christ was present provided the true focus of pilgrimage after the visit to the ancient stones of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where the tomb was empty. This message was echoed by Canon, later Bishop, Riah Abu El Assal, then under 'country arrest' in Nazareth. On other occasions I have heard similarly inspirational homilies from Palestinian bishops and priests and reciprocal contributions from western clergy who have responded with biblical reflections that have expressed messages of encouragement and solidarity for a marginalised minority among a tragically oppressed people.⁶

Spiritually authentic Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land requires the three elements of historical enquiry, liturgy and preaching. In the history of pilgrimage one or more of these three elements has too often been left out. The fourth element of the drive towards political and cultural hegemony over the Holy Land and its people needs to be displaced by an essential commitment to encounter between the pilgrim liturgical community and that of the 'Living Stones of the Land.' Like Simon of Cyrene, today's pilgrim may not immediately recognise the identity of the one carrying the cross. Unaware of the half century-long *Via Dolorosa* of the Palestinian people or that it was from the church of the Holy Land that the west first received the Faith, the pilgrim of today will learn that that church is now in danger of eventually disappearing from the land of Jesus. Such facts surely deserve to find expression in an element of encounter with the 'Living Stones' to be placed at the heart of any programme for Christian pilgrimage in the 'Land of the Holy One'.

⁴ Macpherson, D, 'Living Stones and Living Faith' in *They came and They Saw: Western Christian Experience of the Holy Land*, editor Michael Prior, 1999 (Melisende, London), 64.

⁵ Mark 16: 6b and 7.

⁶ For example: Prior, Michael. 1989. 'Living Stones: A Retreat with Palestinian Christians', *New Blackfriars* 70: 119-23.

FROM THE DIASPORA

*Dr Salem Khamis
an interview with David Toorawa*

David Toorawa talks to Dr Salem Khamis, distinguished Palestinian economist and statistician

** Can you tell me us something about your experience of being a Christian living in the Holy Land?*

Special circumstances of birth, education and work characterise one's experience. I was born (1919) in Reineh, a small village by a main highway two kilometres from Nazareth. About half Reineh's population were Sunni Muslims, the remainder Christians of four denominations-Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Roman Catholics and Anglicans. Our church owed allegiance to the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem and later became the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East.

My elementary and secondary school education leading to the Palestine matriculation was in Palestine government boys schools, commencing in Reineh village (4 years), then Safad (3 years) followed by 3 years in Nazareth, completing in 1936 the second secondary class, which was the highest year in Arab government schools in Palestine towns. The top student in each such school was offered a place in the government Arab college in Jerusalem to complete the last two secondary years. A similar government school system provided for an Arab girls' school. There was no Arab university. Jewish education was a separate system.

For university education Arabs generally had to travel abroad, especially to the American University of Beirut (AUB) in Lebanon, which admitted students of many ethnic origins and religious faiths. Many Palestinian Jewish students also attended the AUB. I joined the AUB as a Palestine government scholar in 1938, which enabled me to meet and make friends with students of all denominations, including Palestinian Jews. My home environment, together with my further education and work, contributed to a harmonious relationship with people of different faiths and nationalities. In Palestine, this harmony was, of course, upset by the British government's policy to establish a Jewish 'National Home' in Palestine which was seized upon by the Zionist to plan for a Jewish state in Palestine and beyond. Yet relations with indigenous Jews usually remained undisturbed, although some Jews suffered during Arab uprisings against the Mandate government seeking independence in a secular Palestinian state.

In my case, apart from attending our church services and other related ceremonies and sometimes attending services in other churches, my being a Christian living in the Holy land did not have any noticeable special affect on my life. In fact, I considered it a major advantage that as a youngster in Safad I found it more convenient to attend school Muslim religious classes rather than availing myself of the special arrangement for the very small number of Christian students in the school. The study of the Koran, in addition to improving my Arabic language, convinced me of the similarities between Islam and the other two monotheistic religions of the Holy

Land. They all worship the same God—the God of all creation. This fact is often misunderstood because of the implication by some that the word 'Allah' refers to a different 'God' of the Muslims when in fact it is simply the Arabic word for 'God'. We, Arab Christians, also pray to 'Allah' the same as the Muslims.

Following my graduation from the AUB in 1942 I taught for one year in St Luke's College in Haifa (previously known as the Scottish college in Safad, which was purchased by the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem and moved to Haifa) St Lukes, being open to Arabs, Jews and others, provided my first contact with the Jewish community in Palestine and it was an excellent example of the harmonious relationship between Arabs and Jews when divorced from politics. This experience was further enhanced when I joined the AUB as a mathematics lecturer (1943-1945), followed by my further studies in the UK (1945-1948).

** What were the particular privileges and problems of the church to which you belonged in Palestine, and were there any problems in which they may have been different from those of other churches in Palestine?*

I am not aware that the Anglican church had any specific privileges and the same applied to the other churches, at least up to 1945, the last year of my residence in Palestine. There were some occasions when our Bishop might have had some influence on certain general local government decisions. For example, the late Anglican Bishop Graham Brown informed me about a government consultation regarding planned retaliatory actions against railway workers committing thefts from British army provisions transported by rail to Palestine or in transit to Lebanon. His advice was that the government should first take action to improve the level of railway workers wages because of their inadequacy and the higher living costs due to the war. Government action to this and was so successful that nothing further was called for.

Apart from official registration of vital events, churches in Palestine were almost fully and independently responsible for all matters relevant to baptism, marriages, and most aspects of inheritance. There were some problems arising from non-recognition by some churches of e.g., marriages and baptisms performed by other churches. On very rare occasions marriage non-recognition allowed a measure of manipulation. These problems later become less following closer inter-church co-operation and tolerance.

** What were the circumstances of your leaving Palestine and starting a new life abroad?*

I left Palestine in September 1945 for further graduate study in England, as a British Council scholar for two years. I spent six months at the University of Leeds followed by a year and a half at the Department of Statistics, University College

London. A third year was to be covered by a Palestine Government Scholarship. Being a Palestinian, it was assumed at the University of Leeds that I was Jewish and Prof. Brodetsky at the Department of Mathematics (who was then director general of the Board of Jewish Deputies) was assigned as my adviser. Having established and presided over an Arab students society at the university union (which organised an extensive programme of lectures on Palestine and Arab history), and embarrassing Prof. Brodetsky by a question after one of his lectures at a Jewish institution, I had a rather difficult time with him which may have affected my relationship with the British Council and the Palestine government regarding their scholarships, leading to the decision of the Jewish authorities to deny me the right to return to my home country.

In late spring of 1948 my research supervisor, Prof. E S Pearson observed my extreme worry about my family following Jewish attacks on Arab areas and the beginning of the forced dispersal of most of the Palestine population. He kindly arranged for me to have my oral Ph.D thesis examination on the basis of its particular completed draft so as to enable me to return home, where I would complete my thesis and the related university requirement. Following the examination I travelled by air to Beirut, arriving just after the Israeli occupation of my village and the north eastern Galilee district which were supposed to belong to the Arab part of Palestine according to the related 1947 United Nations general assembly resolution. Thus I was unable to reach home. I had to take a university job in Syria to support myself and save enough money to enable me to return to England, hoping I would be allowed by the Israeli authorities there to travel to my home. Fortunately, early in 1949 I received a letter from the United Nations, through my supervisor Prof. Pearson, offering me a job with the UN Statistical Office at the UN headquarters in Lake Success, which I accepted. I left Syria for London, via Beirut, in June 1949. Upon arrival I visited the Israeli consular office enquiring about the best way to reach Nazareth and showing them my Palestine passport containing my UK entry visa and the stamped dates of my departure and arrival in 1945 for study in England. I was horror-struck when told I would not be allowed to return home and that I was considered a refugee, even though there had been no 'Israel' in 1945 and no 'refugee' status could rationally be assigned to me. I then visited the USA consulate to obtain a G.4 (diplomatic) visa requested for me by the UN for entry to the USA to be informed that my Palestine passport, which was still valid for a number of years, was not recognised by the USA. So I had to obtain another passport. Although obtaining a Lebanese passport would have been possible, that would have required a longer time and possibly a return to Beirut for this purpose. Eventually I was granted a Jordanian passport and was able to commence my UN duties.

The agony I suffered by failing in my efforts to return home was significantly lessened, firstly and foremost, by my marriage to my long time friend Mary Guy in London prior to my departure to the USA. Secondly, after some initial resistance by the Israeli authorities, I managed to make use of the UN international staff home leave privilege, usually granted every two years, to visit my family accompanied by

Mary and later also my children and renew friendships in my original home environment. My following career, mainly with the UN, FAO and the AUB, meant that my current residence in England commenced as from 1982.

** How do you maintain your sense of Palestinian identity living in Britain?*

I have already referred to my short stay at Leeds University. Upon joining University College, London, in 1946 I took part in establishing an Arab students society in the college and was elected its president. I was also a founding and active member of the Arab students league in Britain (ASL), established early in 1946, and I served as its secretary in 1947/1948. My activities through these two organisations meant contacts with almost all Palestinian students in Britain, organising many meetings and seminars on the Palestinian problem, including the annual general meetings of both organisations and the extraordinary AST, meeting on Palestine following the 1947 general assembly partition of Palestine decision.

Among other activities I spoke on Palestinian issues almost every week at the request of the London Arab office, then initially directed by Musa Alami and later by Edward Atiyeh. Their views on Palestine and related Arab issues I shared. My contacts with family, friends and organisations in Palestine were mainly by correspondence and through Palestinian visitors to London. As one of two ASL representatives summoned in London in 1947 by the (UK) national council of civil liberties. My main part in this was in the conferences commission on anti-Semitism in which, among other things, I stressed the racial oppression directed mainly against the Arab community in Palestine by Zionist organisations.

I mentioned that after joining the UN statistical office (1949-1953) we visited Nazareth twice. I lost this home leave privilege when I resigned from the UN and rejoined the AUB, firstly as associate professor of economics (in charge of statistical activities of the economic research institute, 1953-1955) and then as professor of mathematics and chairman of the Department of Mathematics (1955-1958). Nevertheless, opportunities existed to meet some members of my family, especially those whose surname was not Khamis, and many of my Palestinian friends during the 3 days over Christmas each year when those approved by Israel and Jordan were allowed to visit Arab Jerusalem. However, my contacts with the Palestinian refugees (including AUB students) and my voluntary work as chairman of the AUB Palestinian students loan fund helped me to maintain my sense of Palestinian identity.

During this period, because of the 1958 civil disturbances in Lebanon and Jordan, it was advisable for me to apply for Lebanese citizenship, which was granted to me, my wife, daughter and three sons. These disturbances served as an unpleasant omen for future civil troubles and contributed to my decisions to accept a job offer by the FAO in 1958, initially stationed in Cairo and, as from 1960, at headquarters in Rome.

There were two 2 year periods (1970-72 and 1976-78) when I was seconded to the UN to establish two UN supported statistics institutes. The first was at Makerere

University in Kampala, Uganda, to serve English-speaking African countries, and the second in Baghdad to serve Arab countries, I continued my work with the FAO until my retirement in 1981. The home leave privilege also applies to international staff with FAO as it is a UN Agency. So I was able to visit home in Israel on a number of occasions. The location of Rome had another significant advantage in line with the theme of this question as visits to us by Palestine family members and friends became much easier and cheaper. We spent one year in Rome following my retirement from the FAO. Not being able to return home, I originally planned to retire in Lebanon. However, the civil war which started in 1975 was still going on in 1981 without any signs of an early end, so we had to consider settling in Britain where our four children were already settled. Our plans to return to Lebanon at a convenient time still holds.

The loss of home leave was compensated by more frequent visits to us in Hemel Hempstead by family members and friends from Israel, the West Bank and other parts of the world. There were also the presence of a large number of Palestinians, refugees and others, in Britain later organized into the Association of the Palestinian community in the United Kingdom (APC). When I became a UK citizen in 1987 we were finally able to travel to Israel and the West Bank freely as British subjects. These family visits provided opportunities to foster a sense of Palestinian identity. We also joined the APC, the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (PSC) Friends and Sabeel (UK), the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU), the Palestinian Return Centre, and other organizations involved in Palestinian issues.

** How do you see the situation for the Christian communities in the Holy Land?*

In the short term, I agree with Mr Jamil Bullata's excellent summary in issue No. 19 of the *Living Stones Magazine*, but I am not as pessimistic for the long term. With the expected ultimate just and peaceful solution of the Palestinian problem., more or less along the lines advocated by Sabeel and well expressed by the Revd Naim Ateek, I am quite optimistic that better times await Christian and other communities in Palestine, hopefully with a separation of state and religion.

** What are the prospects for peace in the Middle East?*

There are serious misconceptions surrounding the recent history of Palestine. Amongst these are the so called 'need' of Israel for security when it is by far the most secure state in the region, and the claim of Israeli 'generosity' (as described by, amongst others, Bill Clinton and Ehud Barak) in offering to give up to 95 percent of the occupied West Bank. My conviction is that there is no prospect for Israel to exist in

the long term except as a peaceful, co-operative and truly democratic state, with its pre-1967 boundary, with a democratic Palestine state compromising Gaza and at least the whole West Bank. Although currently most of the Jewish communities are brainwashed by Zionist propaganda regarding their relation with the Arabs, more and more of them will discover over time that, historically, the Jewish communities living in Arab countries suffered no pogroms and generally no discrimination. There is no reason why this will not also prevail in Israel and the expected Palestinian state when a just settlement of the Palestinian issue is achieved. Also, expected further democratic developments in Middle Eastern countries would result in peaceful co-existence, hopefully with a suitable type of increased economic and social co-operation among these countries.

Of course, all this implies the necessity of achieving just solutions to the Palestine refugee problem and the illegal settlements in accordance with UN and international conventions.

** Tell us something about any work you do for the Palestinian cause and for the cause of the Christian community there.*

Any work I do or have done is peripheral to the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people and organizations for ending the oppressive Israeli occupation. Furthermore, for health reasons, all I can currently do is to support activities for organizations providing assistance, including moral and charitable, for a just and peaceful solution. These organizations include those mentioned above and others, e.g., Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), Action around Bethlehem, Children with Disabilities (ABCD), and also those supported by my children who are very much involved in UK activities connected with the Palestinian cause. In 1986, at the request of the Jordanian government, I visited the Najah University Rural Research Institute to evaluate its statistical surveys and submit recommendations for their development.

Before settling in England I assisted the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1977/78 through the UN-supported Baghdad institute in the establishment of the Palestinian central statistics office at PLO headquarters in Damascus. As an advisor to an Arab fund for economic and social development (AFESD), I evaluated the office's progress in the spring of 1982 and presented recommendations for its future programme of work. Also, as an AFESD advisor, I participated in a meeting at their headquarters in Kuwait, attended by their senior staff and representatives of the UN and UN development programme (UNDP) and of the PLO, to discuss the finalising of the proposed UNDP supported assistance programme for Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank.

I also like to help church-supported Palestinian projects and our church in Reineh Village.

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

The Friends of Bethlehem University

Matthew Taylor

As we approach the season of Advent the thoughts of millions of Christians around the world turn to the town of Bethlehem where Our Saviour was born. One little-known university, however, nurtures the Christmas message of peace and goodwill throughout the year to give hope in the troubled land that is present-day Palestine.

The University

Bethlehem University (www.bethlehem.edu) had its beginnings in 1972 when the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Pio Laghi, formed a committee of heads of schools in the West Bank and East Jerusalem to study the possibility of establishing an institution of higher learning which would offer a broad education in arts and sciences.

Subsequently, at the behest of Pope Paul VI, Bethlehem University was founded in October 1973 as a private institute of higher learning for young Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The university is a co-educational institution open to students of all faiths. It is sponsored by the Vatican and administered by the De La Salle Brothers (FSC). For more than a century the Brothers have run schools in the Holy Land as well as elsewhere in the Middle East, teaching spiritual values as well as practical skills. In the United States, the Brothers administer seven colleges and universities which have extensive undergraduate and graduate programs.

The university, the only Catholic one in the Holy Land, has flourished since its inception and is considered one of the leading centres of higher education in the region. According to the Palestinian historian Bernard Sabella, over the last fifty years the Palestinian Christian population of the Holy Land has shrunk from 13 percent to around 2 percent. There are now only 165,000 indigenous Christians, of whom 51,000 live in the West Bank and Gaza. In the face of such large-scale emigration a major goal of the university is to encourage students to remain in Palestine and serve the community after they have graduated. The courses being offered are designed to provide them with the skills necessary to enable them to do so.

Beginning with just 112 students in its first year, the enrolment of the university has increased steadily so that it now serves over 2,000 students from the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. A third of the students are Christian with the remainder being Muslim. Bachelor degrees and diplomas are awarded across five faculties (Arts, Education, Business Administration, Science and Nursing) as well as an Institute of Hotel Management and Tourism. The Faculty of Art includes a Department of Religious Studies.

Since 1974 over 6,000 students have graduated and they now provide essential leadership to the Palestinian people.

Graduates serve their community in a wide variety of fields, from teaching and nursing to catering and commercial enterprise. In addition some have served in the public sector within the ministries of the Palestinian Authority.

During its 29 years of existence Bethlehem University has witnessed the vicissitudes of an often turbulent economic and political environment. During the first *Intifada* the university was forced to close for 3 years (1987-1990) and classes had to be held in off-campus locations. Writing in the *Tablet* last April, Brother David Scarpa, FSC, explains how the university has been under fire all too frequently: 'the Israeli military authorities have made several attacks on [the university] over these last 18 months with grenades, missiles and machine guns. Their excuse was that they were returning fire, but there have never been any armed Palestinians on the university campus.'¹

In October 2001 the university was subject to six days and nights of heavy Israeli bombardment. Although the Vatican flag could be seen flying proudly over the campus this did not save it from frequent shelling. Every building on campus was hit by gunfire and serious damage was inflicted. By a miracle nobody on campus was killed or injured.

On 2 April 2002, Israeli forces invaded the town of Bethlehem. For the first time in its history the university was occupied. All twelve resident Christian Brothers were placed under house arrest. Brother David describes the occupation: 'A fleet of armoured personnel carriers drove onto the campus and more troops arrived to occupy the main buildings and set up a command post. There were perhaps 100 soldiers billeted in the university buildings, with patrols leaving the campus at regular intervals.'² The occupation of the university lasted four days and much physical damage had been inflicted during the initial onslaught.

Throughout the siege of the Church of the Nativity the university remained closed, disrupting classes and postponing completion of the semester. The occupation and curfew imposed on the town of Bethlehem itself was finally lifted in late August. People can now move freely within Bethlehem although other parts of the West Bank are still suffering under occupation.

The new academic year is now under way at the university with an intake of 550 students. Thankfully classes commenced on time and have so far continued without interruption. The 450 students who graduated last year are looking forward to a formal graduation ceremony in a few weeks time. However travel remains a challenge for students and staff alike. Obstacles include the checkpoint at Tantur, where Palestinians suffer arbitrary harassment, as well as the

¹ The *Tablet*, 13 April 2002.

² *Loc. cit.*

Israeli 'modifications' to the area around Rachel's Tomb. In the light of the continuing curfews and closures experienced elsewhere in the West Bank Brother Jerome Sullivan, FSC, Vice-President of Development at the university, is simply happy that the university is open and functioning. However, when I asked him recently about the future he admits 'the situation is tenuous. We are quite concerned about the possible attack on Iraq and the effect it will have on Palestine/Israel.'

Against this uncertain backdrop, and despite almost continuous hardship and struggle, the people of the university have forged an institution which stands as a beacon of hope for the future. Brother Vincent Malham, FSC, is President and Vice-Chancellor of the University. He speaks of a new five-year strategic plan and promotes the slogan 'A University for a New Palestine in the New Millennium'. As he sees it this slogan 'is a challenging call to all members of the university community for creative renewal to better serve the needs of our students, Christians and Muslims alike.' Brother Vincent is also eager for those in the West to show their solidarity and pay Bethlehem a visit: 'we invite you to come to Bethlehem and witness for yourselves a vibrant institution "standing on firm tradition and reaching for an exciting future in the new millennium in the new Palestine."'

The Friends

Friends of Bethlehem University, known as FOBU, was established as a registered charity in 1999. Currently it has around 170 members. Upon learning of Cardinal Basil Hume's terminal illness, some members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre thought it appropriate to have a memorial to commemorate his time as Archbishop of Westminster from 1976 to 1999. Moreover they wanted the Cardinal to be remembered not only in his own country but also abroad, especially in the land of Our Lord's birth.

At the same time Bethlehem University itself was contemplating the creation of a Department of Religious Studies. The Friends then came into being in order to help the university's development and, more specifically, to fund and support the Cardinal Basil Hume Chair for Religious Studies. This was considered a fitting way to remember one whose whole life had been dedicated to promoting the gospel values of peace and justice. These same values form the bedrock of Bethlehem University's commitment. The present holder of the Cardinal Hume Chair for Religious Studies at the University is Fr Peter Dubrul, SJ. Currently there are approximately 36 students in the Department of Religious Studies. The first four-year class of 12 students graduated from the department last year.

The Future

Back in 1999 prospects seemed bright for all the university's graduates: a burgeoning local economy, it seemed, would be buttressed by a steady stream of highly-qualified graduates from the university. Two million tourists were expected to visit Jerusalem, Bethlehem and other Christian sites in celebration of the Millennium Jubilee. New hotels were

constructed in Bethlehem to cater for this eagerly anticipated influx. The Pope himself visited Bethlehem in March 2000 bringing hope for the future. These high hopes have of course since been cruelly dashed. What with travel restrictions, curfews and the all too prevalent risk of violence, tourism has now dried up almost entirely.

Now, for students graduating from the university employment prospects in their local community look bleak. In the Occupied Territories as a whole closures and curfews have wreaked havoc on work opportunities: some 65 percent of the Palestinian population is now unemployed and 75 percent live in poverty (earning less than US\$2 a day).³ Children under the age of 18 constitute one half of this population so the vital importance of education in offering hope for the future is clear. Under present circumstances, however, families are increasingly unable to pay the costs associated with their children's education, such as tuition fees, transport, supplies and clothing. Since 21 June this year most Palestinian towns have been under curfew for 24 hours a day, with Palestinians forced to live under virtual house arrest: unable to access work, medical care, education, and other basic services. The prolonged Israeli closure of the Occupied Territories has crippled the Palestinian economy and led to serious damage to the infrastructure of civil society.

Bethlehem University itself is supported largely by charitable donations. It does not turn away any student who meets the academic criteria but is unable to pay for tuition. As a result the university is always in need of assistance. The future of the university, however, depends not just on its financing, including the payment of student fees, but also on the continuing viability of primary and secondary education in the Occupied Territories. Currently, according to UNICEF figures, over 226,000 children (one quarter of all Palestinian pupils) are unable to reach their classrooms and 580 schools have been forced to close, at least temporarily, because of Israeli military curfews and closures. As the UNICEF representative Pierre Poupard puts it: 'a generation of Palestinian children is being denied their right to an education.'⁴

Brother Jerome reinforces the urgent need for financial support in his Christmas appeal letter: 'Our financial scenario looks like this: only 36 percent of tuition was collected at the time of registration. This means that we find ourselves a half million dollars in arrears at this time of year.' However, Brother Jerome remains resolutely confident about the future and the important role that the university will continue to play: 'in spite of this bad news, we are certain things will improve and we remain committed to the education of Palestinian youth, especially the needy.'

Here in the UK, FOBU's chairman is Mgr Vladimir Felzmann, the Director of All Saints Pastoral Centre at London Colney. FOBU themselves are busy raising money for an endowment fund which will ensure the continuation of the Cardinal Hume Chair. The target sum is US\$500,000 (£320,000)

³ The Palestine Monitor, 3 October 2002 (www.palestinemonitor.org).

⁴ UNICEF, 2 October 2002 (www.unicef.org/media/newsnotes/02nn34opt.htm).

of which almost 40 percent (US\$190,000/ £120,000) has so far been raised. Donors are also sought to contribute towards a separate scholarship fund of US\$25,000 (£16,000). This fund, it is hoped, will generate an annual income to cover the costs of a Religious Studies student.

FOBU have held various fund-raising activities since its inception including a series of lectures as well as a concert of classical music. You are encouraged to show your support for the university by joining FOBU. To do so please complete the application form below.

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.
Above the deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight.

We all pray that the university will continue to be a beacon of hope in these troubled times and that Bethlehem itself will be blessed with peace this Christmas.

*Application for membership of
FOBU*

**FRIENDS OF BETHLEHEM UNIVERSITY
Reg. charity No. 1077818**

TITLE (e.g. Mr)
SURNAME
FIRST NAMES
ADDRESS
.....
.....
.....
POSTCODE
EMAIL
..... TELEPHONE

- Please send me more details
- I enclose my membership subscription of £15.00 (or £50 for 5 years). Please make out a cheque payable to FOBU or else complete the card instructions below
- I enclose a donation of £.....
- Please debit my VISA/MASTER/CAF/OTHER Card for £.....

CARD NUMBER
EXPIRY DATE
SIGNATURE
DATE / /

GIFT AID DECLARATION

I declare that I am a UK taxpayer and that I authorise FOBU to reclaim tax on any donations I make from 6 April 2002 until further notice.

SIGNATURE

Please send your completed application form to:
Mgr Vladimir Felzmann KHS
All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans, Herts AL2 1AF