Tilting Eastwards:

The Jewish-Christian Encounter and Theologies of Land,

Palestinian Christian Thought, Zionist Political Theologies and the ecclesial perspective of Fr. David M.Neuhaus SJ,

with specific reference to the Holy Land as the renewed Context for the Theological Turn in Jewish-Christian Dialogue

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ABSTRACT

This thesis posits that there has been a fundamental re-positioning of the Jewish-Christian Encounter: an "Easterly Tilt" that has been brought about by geo-political realities whereby "land" becomes a critical dimension to both Jewish and Christian self-understanding. These realities in particular concern the establishment of the State of Israel as a national homeland for the Jews and the displacement of Palestinians.

Jewish-Christian dialogue has hitherto been forged out of a European context of Western ecclesial hegemony accompanied by an anti-Judaic theology. Political antisemitism, culminated in the Holocaust, has led to a theological reappraisal within Christianity regarding the understanding of and relationship to the Jewish people. This has sought to shed ideas of theological contempt and replacement, instead looking to regard the Jewish tradition as complementary.

However, there has been a "theological turn" in Jewish self-understanding whereby the Land of Israel has, since the Holocaust, become central to how Jews comprehend their place in the contemporary world and how the bringing together of a political emancipatory philosophy of Zionism and the land of ancient yearning has brought about a theological turn in Jewish thought. This is explored through the compelling narrative of ancient Masada and the response to it in the form of Levantinism in the work of Jacqueline Kahanoff and David Ohana.

Concomitantly, there has recently been an “ecclesial turn” in Christian self-understanding whereby Eastern Christianity (that is the churches of what is commonly referred to as “the Middle East”) is taken more seriously, particularly in terms of its religious and political displacement in the Holy Land. The focus is Palestinian Christianity, both in its historical context, where Islam has been its “primary religious other”, and its contemporary ecclesial challenges in the face of occupation, and how contextual theologies of land inform contemporary ecclesial thought, especially in the work of Palestinian Lutheran theologian, Mitri Raheb.

As a result of this reality, many of the essential ingredients of the Jewish-Christian encounter have changed in the light of these geo-political realities. The work of Israeli Jesuit priest Fr David Neuhaus SJ offers insights into this emerging dialogical space in the Middle East: how his pastoral and theological work has brought him into direct relationship with Israelis and Palestinians, with Christians, Jews and Muslims, and how his writings point to the future shaping of the Jewish-Christian dialogue in its Eastern context, in particular how the imperative to repair the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people is to relate to the obligations of justice of Palestinians.

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This thesis is dedicated to my son Kieran.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

How does the reality of Jewish-Christian self-understanding in relation to the easterly tilt towards the land impact the Jewish-Christian encounter, especially in relation to Palestinian Christian political and religious thought, and David Neuhaus' ecclesial and theological perspectives?

1.1 The Central Thesis

Two important historical realities of the postmodern age collide to create a geopolitical and theological recalibration of the compass of Jewish-Christian relations in the 21st century that orientates it towards the Middle East. This we will characterise as an easterly tilt in the Jewish-Christian encounter that has been brought about by a radical theological turn in Jewish self-understanding in the post-modern world and this has profound implications for Christian theology given its relationship to Judaism is of crucial importance. This will be described as a *theological turn* in Judaism and an *ecclesial turn* in Christianity. And critical to this is the appreciation that the essential component parts of the dialogical encounter between Jews and Christians have changed to a significant degree.

The first of these realities is the change in Jewish self-understanding in the 20th century, where Zionism emerges as the Jewish response to antisemitism which would intensify after the Shoah.[1] This would place the matter of "land"

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[1] Yet, as Rabbi Jonathan Sacks suggests, the existence of Israel did not end antisemitism as Theodor Herzl hoped but has presented a new form of anti-Judaic discourse. See Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture*, London: Houghton and Stoughton Ltd, 2009, pp. 1ff. Meanwhile, Israel has become embedded in its own new context where its European inspiration has become less important, see Diana Pinto, *Israel Has Moved*, Harvard, 2013.

and territory at the heart of Judaism with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 where a Jewish polity emerges for the first time in nearly two thousand years. The new State of Israel would come to be regarded as a Jewish State and this would have a profound effect upon non-Jews living within its borders, and more widely, the Occupied Territories following the Six Day War in 1967.[2]

Diana Pinto in her study of how “Israel has moved” describes how far Israel has travelled in its short history, with its many contradictions and challenges, that have taken it a significant distance from its post-Holocaust context into the modern digital age, yet still wrestling with the issues of conflict, violence and division.[3] And so, we might assert from the outset that the Jewish-Christian encounter is one unfolding amidst changes in the socio-political as well as theological context.

But there is also a physical repositioning of Judaism: as of 2010 there were estimated to be around 14 million Jews worldwide, 6 million Jews in North America, 1.4 million in Europe, 5.6 million in the Middle East and North Africa, mostly living in Israel, 100,000 in sub Saharan Africa and around 200,000 in the Asia-Pacific region.[4] However, when this is compared to the period prior to the Holocaust the world Jewish population was estimated to be around 15 million with 9.5 million resident in Europe.[5] This suggests two things—that the

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[2] Israel is one of the few countries that lack international recognition of their external boarders, mainly arising from the contested nature of the post-1967 occupation and the status of refugees post-1948.

[3] Diana Pinto, *Israel Has Moved*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013.

[4] However, these figures change according to have strict or liberal the definition of Jewishness. Pew Research Centre: https://www. pewresearch. org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-jew/ (accessed 29/05/2023).

[5] Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Museum: https://encyclopedia. ushmm. org/content/en/article/jewish-population-of-europe-in-1933-population-data-by-country (accessed 29/05/2023).

worldwide Jewish population in the 21st century has barely recovered to its pre-Holocaust figures, indicating the scale of the Nazis so-called “Final Solution” but also there has been a significant geographical repositioning of Judaism away from its European heartlands to the place of its ancient yearning.

The concomitant second reality is the globalisation of world Christianity, for in a post-colonial age it is a religion that is increasingly less Western in orientation and where the challenges of the church in the global South are of pressing importance to Christian self-understanding in the world. This has raised a variety of concerns faced by churches in the non-Western world, of which the survival of Christianity in the region where it was born—the Holy Land—is arguably the most intense and urgent matter for Christianity in the 21st century. Here again, geographical repositioning becomes a critical factor, both in terms of the physical displacement of Palestinian communities, which is a consequence of Jewish repositioning, and in terms of Eastern Christianity’s ontological relationship with Jerusalem: in the post-1967 reality, the Holy Sites in Israeli annexed East Jerusalem become inaccessible to Christians in much of the Middle East. Indeed, in ecclesiological terms, there is still some way to go before theology has fully comprehended the significance of the politically changed status of Jerusalem in the post-1967 Middle East. Palestinian liberation theologies will be a critical accompanier in this enquiry.

These two inter-related realities have relocated the centre of gravity for Jewish-Christian relations from Europe to the Middle East or more poetically we might say from Vienna to Jerusalem. Thus, there has been an “easterly

tilt” in the Jewish-Christian encounter, and the emerging characteristics of this are central to this research. It is characterised as a “tilt” rather than a “relocation” because the theological and cultural issues faced by Jews in Europe remain of crucial importance. However, this new reality might suggest that to view the Jewish-Christian encounter only through the historical lens of Europe is to view only half a picture, observing that a good deal of the academic discourse of Jewish-Christian dialogue speaks out of a pre-1967 political context, when the dominant story is of the Holocaust and antisemitism and prior to Israel’s annexation of Jerusalem and the West Bank which would have profound theological, ecclesial as well as political implications.

Yet this easterly tilt does not change a fundamental theological reality, that of the particular relationship between Judaism and Christianity which are closely related to one another historically and theologically. Rabbi Abraham Heschel puts it this way:

> Both share the prophet’s belief that God chooses agents through whom His will is made known and His work is done throughout history. Both Judaism and Christianity live in certainty that mankind is in need of ultimate redemption, that God is involved in human history, that in relations between man and God is at stake, and that the humiliation of man is a disgrace before God.[6]

That being so, Jewish-Christian dialogue arose out of a distinctly European context in which ecclesial Christianity has been central to how political power

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[6] Quoted in Eugene Korn and John T. Pawlikowski OSM (eds), *Two Faiths, One Covenant? Jewish and Christian Identities in the Presence of the Other*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2005, p. 1. Abraham Heschel (1907–72) was an important Jewish philosopher of Polish and American heritage who was a significant leader of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and friend of confidant of martin Luther King Jr.

was manifested, although this political reality is not always acknowledged even if it is more often assumed.[7] Jewish experience had been therefore one of minority status and transient presence. In different parts of Europe, whilst the Jewish experience differed widely, there is no place where there is a historically continuous and unchallenged Jewish presence. The theological characteristic of this is a theology of replacement, sometimes referred to as supersessionism, whereby Christianity represents the New Covenant that is the fulfilment of the Old, the former often being characterized by "love and grace" whilst the latter as one of law and the demands of obedience. The Old Covenant, it was assumed, would eventually wither away as Christian civilization advanced.[8] More aggressively Jews came to be blamed for the death of Christ, known as "the teaching of contempt", and thus the theological assertions of Jewish redundancy quickly gave rise to forms of social and cultural anti-Judaism that would later morph into antisemitism.

This political and cultural anti-Judaism resulted in the persecution of Jewish communities who were often uprooted from their social situation, often by force and blamed for social calamity. The myth of the "Wandering Jew" arose in the Middle Ages and vividly illustrates the struggle of Jews to find home and rootedness.[9] There are different versions of the myth but typically it depicts a

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[7] See Alana Vincent: "Convergence and Asymmetry: Observations on the Current State of Jewish-Christian Dialogue", *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology* 4.2 (2020) 201–223.

[8] See R. Kenneth Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996, pp. 1ff.

[9] The myth of "the Wandering Jew" would also feature in 19th century literature and poetry with Romantic writers finding affinity with a figure who finds themselves alienated from society and on the outside of culture, in particular in the work of Byron, Shelley and Wordsworth. See Bryan Cheyette, "Antisemitism in Modern Literature and Theater: English Literature", in Steven Katz (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism*, Cambridge University Press 2022, pp. 377–391.

Jewish cobbler who when asked for refreshment by Christ as he journeys to Calvary with the cross, refuses to offer such hospitality and is cursed by Christ to wander the earth for eternity with no place to call home. This myth will be critical to the trajectory of Jewish self-understanding as it seeks to free itself from European subjugation.

1.2 The Context of Antisemitism

The flourishing of Christianity in Europe would come to indicate the victory of the New Covenant in Christ over his accusers and murderers. It had its roots in the earliest years of Christianity with the fundamental break between church and synagogue, reflected in some of the language of the New Testament, and taking a firm hold in subsequent centuries with notorious anti-Judaic utterances from Church Fathers including Augustine, Cyprian, John Chrysostom and Tertullian, and would continue throughout Church history culminating in its most virulent form in the writings of Martin Luther, whose treatise “On the Jews and their lies” would enter the mainstream literature of post-19th century discourse of antisemitism. This is also reflected in a deep and profound way through liturgy and hymnody and illustrated best in the words of the Good Friday liturgy (prior to the 1955 revision) that spoke of “*perfidis Judaeis*”:

> Let us pray also for the faithless Jews: that Almighty God may remove the veil from their hearts; so that they too may acknowledge Jesus Christ our Lord. Almighty and eternal God, who dost not exclude from Thy mercy even Jewish faithlessness: hear our prayers, which we offer

> for the blindness of that people; that acknowledging the light of thy Truth, which is Christ, they may be delivered from their darkness.

And the hymn “Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending”:

> Those who set at nought and sold Him,
>
> Pierc’d and nail’d him to the tree.
>
> Deeply wailing. Deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
>
> Shall the true Messiah see.

A critical theological issue on which this turns is within Christian ecclesial self-understanding whereby the early church very quickly understood itself as being the New Israel, and thus the fulfilment of the Judaic covenant. Hans Küng moots that the apostles would have seen themselves as the bearers of the true Israel and that over time the early church came to see this in exclusive terms over and against a Judaism that had not recognized Jesus as the Messiah. The requirement therefore was that the Jews should submit to a Christian understanding of history and their place within it. [10] More specifically the Western Christian tradition has defined history and cultural context and Jews were obligated to find their place within it without any sense of their history and destiny.

The “Teaching of Contempt”[11] brought with it notions of Jews as shady, amoral, greedy, exploitative and most importantly rejected by God and cursed

[10] Hans Küng, *The Church*, Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oats, 1968, p. 108f; see also Alain Marchadour and David Neuhaus, *The Land, the Bible and History: Toward the Land that I will show you*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2007, pp. 108f.

[11] The term “teaching of contempt” was coined by Jules Isaac (1877-1963) who, in his seminal book *Jésus et Israël* (1948, and translated into English in 1971 as Jesus and Israel), traced the theological and ecclesial roots of antisemtism.

to wander without any place to call their own. But the most pronounced manifestation of this anti-Judaism was the “blood libel” where Jews were accused of the kidnap and murder of Christian boys who were mocked and tortured prior to death as though the Jews were killing Christ again.[12] Some of the most notorious cases included Hugh of Lincoln, William of Norwich and Simon of Trent, boys that died under mysterious circumstances and which led to the blaming of local Jews and subsequent lynchings and trials.[13] The habit of blaming local Jews for infanticide and child abduction has been discussed by the historian John Boswell in his study of the practice of infant abandonment in Medieval Europe and has suggested that part of the reason why Jews became implicated in such accusations was due to Jewish families rescuing abandoned infants and raising them as their own.[14]

The case of Simon of Trent (1472–1475) is instructive: local Jews confessed to the killing under juridical torture and many were executed and subsequently Simon attracted a cult following beyond his native Italy, with several attempts of have him canonized, and claims of miracles attributed to him. However, it was not until 1965 that Simon was removed from the official list of Catholic martyrs.[15] Simon of Trent, and other such instances of alleged filicide are also

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[12] Emily M. Rose, “Crusades, Blood Libel, and Popular Violence”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism*, Cambridge University Press 2022, pp. 194–212.

[13] See David Gillett, “William of Norwich and Echoes Through the Ages”, in Rabbi Tony Bayfield (Ed.*), Deep Calls to Deep: Transforming Conversations Between Jews and Christians*, London: SCM Press, 2017, pp. 103–118.

[14] See John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance.* New York: Pantheon, 1988, pp.350ff

[15] See further: Elyada, A. (2014). Stephen Bowd and J. Donald Cullington, eds. “On Everyone’s Lips”: Humanists, Jews, and the Tale of Simon of Trent. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 418; Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance 36. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012. xv 240 pp. *Renaissance Quarterly, 67*(2), 655-657: Robert S.Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*, New York: Random House 2010, pp.89ff

instructive in the manner in which anti-Judaism (a theological standpoint that blamed the Jews for killing Christ) and antisemitism (a racist attitude that ostracized Jews and blamed them for social calamity) intersect and how the latter was given greater social authority because the teaching of the church lent theological justification to the social victimization of Jews.

Forms of anti-Judaism and antisemitism continued through history and are attested to in literature and the arts as well as political and theological discourse. The most notorious example of this is the figure of Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* meanwhile in a later edition of his novel *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens, who at first had been resistant to the idea that his characterization of Fagin was antisemitic, excised no fewer than 180 references to Fagin as "the Jew"![16] Meanwhile from the French Revolution onwards, there was a tendency to see Jews as opponents of movements of social change and revolution, with virulent language used against Jews by figures as diverse as the composer Richard Wagner and philosophers such as Hegel and Schopenhauer, who, in the words of Michael Macek view Jews as "the empirical impediment to the construction of an idealist type of body politic."[17]

By the 20th century antisemitic ideas reached their full ferment. One of the most significant developments was the forgery of the so-called "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" which emerged in Tsarist Russia in 1902 at the time when

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[16] For a further discussion of the theme of Antisemitism and the work of Dickens, see: Susan Meyer, "Antisemitism and social critique in Dickens's Oliver Twist", *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 33(1), Cambridge University Press 2005, pp. 239-253

[17] Quoted in Allan Arkush, "The Enlightenment and its Negative Consequences", in *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2022, 291–306.

the Russian Zionist Congress was being held.[18] It purports to be the record of Jewish plans for world domination and came to be a key influence in the antisemitism of the German Third Reich and its "final solution" and whilst it has been proven to be a forgery, it continues to influence antisemitic ideas across the globe.[19] Hannah Arendt suggests that the point of the Protocols is not so much that it is an obvious forgery but that it contained sufficient plausibility in the receptive minds of those who read it to amplify antisemitism in the first half of the 20th century.[20]

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks calls antisemitism a "mutating virus with four distinct mutations": (1) the early Church's opposition to Judaism, (2) the Middle Ages with the othering of Jews during the Crusades and the scapegoating of Jews for social calamity (e.g. The Black Death), (3) the nineteenth century's antisemitism that would end with the Holocaust, and (4) late twentieth century, early 21st century anti-Zionism.[21] The fourth of these "mutations" goes to the very heart of the complexity of the Jewish relationship to the non-Jewish world in the 21st century and is particularly acute in the context of the Jewish-Christian encounter in the Holy Land. Yet Arendt has observed what she calls

[18] For the wider context of Antisemitism in Tsarist Russia, see Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*, New York: Random House, 2010, pp. 154–182; Laura Engelstein, "Antisemitism in Late Imperial Russia and Eastern Europe through 1920", in *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism*, pp. 325–339.
[19] The forgery was first proved in *The Times* of London in 1921, which identified it as a crude plagiarism of the work of the French writer Maurice Joly's "Dialogue in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu" which was concerned with the political ambitions in France of Napoleon III and is not concerned with Jews at all.
[20] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, London: Penguin, 1951, 2017, preface to Part 1, p. xix.
[21] Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009, pp. 89–111. See also David J. Goldberg, *This is Not the Way: Jews, Judaism and Israel*, London: Faber and Faber, 2012, pp. 67–99.

“eternal antisemitism”, something that is deeply engrained in the human psyche and serves as a significant means to the furthering of Jewish unity.[22]

It is against this background of anti-Judaic thought that Christian theology would come to develop in the wake of the Shoah and the urgency to find a new theological understanding of the Jewish people.

1.3 Christian Theology and Jewish particularity

Jewish-Christian dialogue is to a significant extent influenced by a Western Christian ecclesial enquiry into the essence of Judaism, and therefore its own origins and its ongoing relationship to an abiding covenant. The first reason for this is a theological investigation into the continuing flourishing of Judaism as it relates to Christian self-understanding. Thomas Torrance, one of the leading Reformed theologians after Karl Barth, is particularly emphatic on this when he observed:[23]

> The time has surely come for us to enlist the aid of the Jews in helping us to interpret Jesus as he is actually presented to us in the Jewish scriptures. We desperately need Jewish eyes to help us see what we cannot see because of our gentile lenses, that is the culture-conditioned habits of thought and interpretation which we bring to Jesus, and which makes us read into him the kind of observational

[22] Arendt, op. cit., p. 8f.

[23] The Very Reverend Professor Thomas F. Torrance (1913–2007) was a leading Scottish Presbyterian theologian, who has published extensively in the field of Systematic Theology. As well as his academic career, including being Professor of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh, he played a critical role in historic international agreements between the Orthodox Churches and the Reformed Tradition on the understanding of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

> images which have played such a dominant role in our literary culture and, until recent decades, our scientific culture as well.

Torrance also suggests that both the Western and Eastern traditions of Christianity[24] have had a tendency to "Gentilise" Jesus and thus removing him from both his religious context and that of the historical and political context in the land. And that:

> the continued attempt to make Jesus relevant to modern ways of thought has had the effect of obscuring him, for all the time we have been engaged in plastering upon the face of Jesus a mask of different gentile features which prevent us from seeing him and understanding him as he really is, as Jew—and certainly prevents our brethren the Jews from recognizing in this stylized Christ which we equate with 'the historical Jesus' the Messiah whom they are still expecting. [25]

Critical to this has been the nature of covenant and the salvific status of the Jews. Karl Barth for instance saw the election of Israel as an important underlying theme as he attempted to reformulate the work of God in Christ in the wake of the Holocaust, famously suggesting that Judaism presented the most urgent "ecumenical" task for the Church.[26] There is also the imperative

[24] Although it should be noted that for Torrance the "Orthodox East" was Russian and Greek rather than Eastern and Oriental.

[25] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, Colorado Springs: Hemers and Howard, 1992, 2nd edition, p. 19f. Torrance was one of the most prominent post-Barthian Reformed theologians of the 20th century, who wrote mostly in the field of systematic theology. These observations are illustrative of the post-Holocaust developments in systematic theology that were concerned with the relationship of the Church to Israel and thus Judaism. See also Todd Speidell (ed.), *Participatio: Journal of the Thomas Torrance Theological Fellowship*, Volume 4: T. F. Torrance and Orthodoxy.

[26] Karl Barth's writings in relation to Jewish Election are extensively discussed in Katherine Sonderegger, *That Jesus was Born a* Jew, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992; Mark R. Lindsay, Barth, *Israel and Jesus: Karl Barth's Theology of Israel*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2007; see also Donald W. Norwood, *Reforming Rome: Karl Barth and Vatican II*, Eerdmans, 2015, pp. 222–230, which discusses Barth in relation to *Nostra Aetate*.

to understand Christian theology in the context of its umbilical relationship to Judaism, especially in regard to the interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures.[27] Then there is the second, but not unrelated reason, that of the Western Catholic tradition's[28] coming to terms with the Shoah/Holocaust and the way in which the broad trajectory of Catholic and Protestant theology has implicitly and sometimes explicitly manifested anti-Judaism.

R. Kenneth Soulen exposes what he regards to be the inherent contradiction in Christian supersessionist theology:

> Simply put, supesessionism is a specifically theological problem because it threatens to render the existence of the Jewish people a matter of indifference to the God of Israel. Just in this way, supersessionism introduces a profound note of the incoherence into the heart of Christian reflection about God. Whilst it may be possible to imagine a god who is indifferent to the existence of the Jewish people, it is impossible to imagine the God of the Hebrew Scriptures, the God of Israel. If Christians nevertheless claim to worship the God of Israel while teaching God's indifference toward the people Israel, they are

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[27] Amongst the extensive range of literature include the work of Christian scholars such as Ed Sanders in the fields of history and Biblical Studies, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, London: SCM Press 1977, *Jesus and Judaism*, London: SCM Press 1985; *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, London: SCM Press, 1992, as well as Jewish scholars including Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historians Reading of the Gospels*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977, *Jesus and the World of Jesus,* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983, *Jesus in the Jewish World*, London: SCM Press 2010; also Daniel Boryarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994; and more recently Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, Oxford, second edition 2017. In the field of theology the works of Mary Boys and John Pawliakowski

[28] "Western Catholic Tradition" is intended to include here post-reformation churches as well as what is commonly referred to as the "Roman Catholic Church".

> engaging in a massive theological contradiction. Moreover, they throw the credibility of the Christian confession itself into doubt.[29]

Thus Jewish-Christian dialogue starts with the premise that the relationship has a particularity that is not found in other dialogical partnerships: Jews are therefore the primary religious other in Western Christian discourse.[30] But is this necessarily the case? Is there a risk of instrumentalizing Judaism in order to reinforce Christian particularity? In other words, there is the tendency to view Jews and their theological insights as necessary for how Christianity takes account of itself in a post-Holocaust world. Thus, a rabbinic reading of the historical Jesus as a rabbi in dispute with other rabbis, or even Jesus the Pharisee involved in controversy with his fellow Pharisees, is often revelatory to Western Christians and helps to address the hermeneutical problem where the New Testament might be read adversarially in relation to the Church and Judaism. This is the mirror image of Christian theology of previous generations that sought to eradicate Judaism culturally and theologically. Alana M. Vincent meanwhile has outlined how churches and councils of churches have not given due attention to the asymmetry in the relations between Christian ecclesial bodies in their engagement with Jewish institutions.[31]

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[29] Soulen, op. cit., p. 4.

[30] This is testified to the array of published material that offer a dialogue between Jewish and Christian scholars, for example: Tony Bayfield and Marcus Braybrooke (eds), *Dialogue with a Difference: The Manor House Group Experience*, London: SCM Press, 1992; Tony Bayfield (ed.), *Deep Calls to Deep: Transforming Conversations Between Jews and Christians*, London: SCM Press 2017, and also by the success of dialogue bodies serving Jewish-Christian dialogue including the International Council of Christians and Jews, the (British) Council of Christians and Jews. See also Emmanuel Nathan, Anya Topalski (eds), *Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition? A European Perspective*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2016.

[31] Alana M. Vincent, "Convergence and Asymmetry: Observations on the Current State of Jesus-Christian Dialogue", *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology*, 4. 2 (2020), pp. 201–223.

This instrumentalizing is most often laid bare in a practical sense with the Christian practice of Sedar meals on Maundy Thursday which are often accused of theological appropriation of another tradition.[32] The other danger with Jewish-Christian dialogue is that it casts the Jew as the victim of Western Christian power and prejudice, and therefore in need of rescuing, rather than a tradition that has developed its own ability to resist oppression and take control of its own destiny. There is a real danger of ecclesial groupthink that characterizes Judaism in particular ways that may not be closely aligned with the self-understanding of most Jews. To put this differently, Judaism does not exist to authenticate Christianity and that Judaism, especially in the post-Holocaust world, is self-referencing.

Thus, Jewish self-understanding has been developing from one framed by its own story in Europe to the new story in the land of its ancient belonging that has subsequently been named Israel. The post-holocaust German reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann's observation that after the Shoah (European) Judaism would inevitably revolutionize its place in the world accentuates this point.[33] The philosophical significance is as important as the political. Gershom Scholem, in reflecting upon his own experience of leaving Europe for Israel (but with obvious application for others), commented that by leaving

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[32] The contemporary practice in some Christian (mostly Protestant) Churches of conducting "Christian" Seder meals on Maundy Thursday is hotly debated and extensively discussed in church journals and newspapers. See for instance Steve M. Schlissel, "Should Christians Eat the Seder Meal?", in *Reformed Worship: Resources for Planning and Leading Worship*, *https://www. reformedworship. org/article/december-1987/should-christians-eat-seder-meal* ; Jeff Brumley, "Why Christians should think hard before holding Seder meals during Holy Week", *Baptist News Global*, April 2017 https://baptistnews. com/article/christians-think-hard-holding-seder-meals-holy-week/#. YSDtqUuSmUk (accessed 23/11/2021) . For a more indepth discussion, see Marianne Moyart, "Christianizing Judaism? On the Problem of Christian Seder Meals" https://www. jcrelations. net/articles/article/christianizing-judaism-on-the-problem-of-christian-seder-meals. html (accessed 23/11/2021).

[33] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, London: SCM Press, 1977, p. 136f.

Europe behind Jews was stepping out of world history in order to re-enter Jewish history.[34] The "return to history" is a common theme in Zionist discourse, although with a variety of interpretations. This has included its association with the myth of the empty and uncultivated land, thus bringing together a people and a land that had been absent from history, as well as having the meaning (as with Scholem) of the Jews taking hold of their destiny. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, however, identifies a problem with the "return to history" notion in that it appeared to acquiesce to a Christian anti-Jewish polemic about the Jews and their place in history: that the Jews had excluded themselves from history by their rejection of the Gospels.

> Thus, from a Jewish point of view, to accept the Enlightenment perception of history meant accepting that attitude whose rejection had previously defined Jewish identity.[35]

In another respect the notion of "return to history" also represented a disruption in Christian anti-Jewish polemic. The myth of "the Wandering Jew" which we discussed earlier vividly illustrates this dramatic disruption of anti-Judaic discourse as the Jews have returned to their ancient home as a settled and rooted people. The "return to history" therefore serves to refute the characterizations of Judaism by Christianity, but also Islam, a point made by David Hartman:

> Israel's return to history as a political community constitutes a proclamation to the world that Judaism and the Jewish people cannot

[34] See Jay Howard Geller, "From Berlin and Jerusalem: On the Germanness of Gershom Scholem", *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 35, No. 2, June 2011, p. 211–232.
[35]Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile, History, and the Nationalization of Jewish Memory: Some Reflections on the Zionist Notion of History and Return", *Journal of Levantine Studies* Vol. 3 No. 2, Winter 2013, pp. 37–70.

> be reduced to a spiritual abstraction. When Judaism manifests itself as the way of life of a particular historical people, as it can do in Israel today, it is a permanent obstacle to any theological view that perceives Judaism as the superseded forerunner of the universalist conceptions of Christian and Islamic monotheism.[36]

Thus, Christian theology should be cautious in how it writes Judaism into its own theological narrative: not to instrumentalize nor to reduce it to the very spiritual abstraction to which Hartman refers. Judaism in the 21st century is playing a role in the unfolding of history, and this is why questions of "land" are so critical and why Judaism needs to be understood in its rediscovered Eastern location.

And because this return to history is in Judaism's ancient territorial covenantal context, the focus has indeed shifted from Europe to Israel. The urgent question therefore is what this easterly tilt means for the Jewish-Christian encounter when this land is not only the ancient place of belonging for Jews but the birthplace of Christianity and the context of unbroken Christian presence. And whilst it is true to say that the Western Catholic tradition has historically not merited the ontological reality of Christian presence in the Holy Land, this has in recent years changed, largely as a result of ecumenical convergence in matters of Faith and Order.[37]

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[36] David Hartman, *A Living Covenant: The Innovative Spirit in Traditional Judaism*, New York, 1985, fifth edition 2012, p. 304.

[37] The "Faith and Order" movement within the Christian ecumenical movement, largely but not exclusively taken forward by the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity within the Vatican and the World Council of Churches, has sought to achieve theological an ecclesial convergence on matters where previously these were sources of division between churches, especially between the Catholic West and the Orthodox East.

This is further complicated by the reality of Jewish hegemony over ancient Christian churches that has contributed to the displacement of those said communities. Furthermore, Palestinian Christians have largely viewed Muslims as their primary religious other and invariably view Jews through the lens of the Israeli occupation of their historic homeland.[38] Therefore, this research has brought together the insights of Palestinian Christian theologians and the Jewish-Israeli perspectives, particularly those of Eastern Mizrahi tradition.[39] And for this reason the Jewish-Christian encounter has already tilted eastwards because Judaism relocated and been re-territoralized, even if this is not acknowledged by most Christian commentators and theologians of the Jewish-Christian encounter.

1.4 Theology and Land

A characteristic of the easterly tilt is the shift away from spiritualized language about the land to a serious consideration of the political and ecclesial realities of the Jewish-Christian encounter in the Holy Land. Therefore, we might observe that "theology of land" is a theological anthropology, for "land" and "presence" is where humanity lives out its vocation. For Christian theology

[38] David Neuhaus himself has himself observed that many Palestinians imagine (Jewish) Israelis as police offers or members of the IDF, and the Protestant evangelical conferences "Christ at the Checkpoint" often reinforce this idea.

[39] See also, Yoav Peled, "Towards a redefinition of Jewish nationalism in Israel? The enigma of Shas", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21: 4, (1998) 703–727; Hussein A. Mansour: "Zionism on the Nile: An essay on the Zionist sentiments of Egyptian Jewry in the early 20th century between the Zionist national narrative and the Mizrahi post-Zionist narrative", https://www.academia.edu/3725173/Zionism_on_the_Nile_An_essay_on_the_Zionist_sentiments_of_Egyptian_Jewry_in_the_early_20th_century_between_the_Zionist_national_narrative_and_the_Mizrahi_post_Zionist_narrative?email_work_card=view-paper (accessed 11/04/2021); Atalia Omer, "Hitmazrehut: Or Becoming of the East: Re-Orientating Israeli Social Mapping," *Critical Sociology* 1–12, 2015; Malka Hillel Shulewitz (ed), *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*, London: Continuum, 2000.

"land" is the context of God's salvific relationship with the world. This begins with the promises to Biblical Israel which are deeply rooted in place and history, and even in periods of exile are the promises firmly rooted in what Jurgen Moltmann calls "the horizons of history".[40] Thus faith is as much about human lived experienced in the journey with God as it is to do with matters of the spiritual realm. Land is at the very heart of the covenant with Israel and is where God bestows mercy and bounty but also can withdraw it with consequences for Israel's residency in the land. Walter Brueggemann contends that land is central to Biblical faith and suggests land as the means of organizing Biblical theology. He distinguishes between "space", which is an arena of freedom and no accountability, and "place" that invokes history, identity and destiny:

> The land for which Israel yearns and which it remembers is never unclaimed space but is always a place with Yahweh, a place well filled with memories of life with him and promise from him and vows to him. It is land that provides the central assurance to Israel of its historicality, that it will be and always must be concerned with actual rootage in a place that is a repository for commitment and therefore identity.[41]

Thus, we might acknowledge from the outset that Jewish particularity is inextricably linked to a specific land and thus also to history. Theologies of land therefore are also theologies of history. Christian particularity rests in the figure of Jesus Christ in whom the New Covenant has been universalized, yet it is also linked to history: land as the context for incarnation, crucifixion and

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[40] Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, London: SCM Press 1965, transl. 1967, pp. 106ff.
[41] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002, second edition, p. 5.

resurrection and are located in moments of place and time. As Clare Amos observes, the Doctrine of the Incarnation suggests that place and land are significant for Christian theology:

> The incarnation of Christ is, for Christians, the point where God intersects with humanity, eternity intersects with time, and universal space intersects with a particular point of geography … Incarnation does not at all remove or supersede this necessary “scandal of particularity” of the which the city of Jerusalem is one of the most powerful examples. Incarnation in fact requires that we take seriously the temporal and geographical particularities and parameters of Christ’s life, for otherwise we begin to slip into a gnostic vision.[42]

Yet, land itself is a neglected concern when with regard to Christian theology more broadly and Jewish-Christian dialogue specifically. W. D. Davies offers an explanation of why this might be so, and why scholars such as Brueggemann have more recently sought to rebalance the theological discourse. Davies suggests that Judaism from the earliest Christian period, was understood in terms of a body of ideas with which Christianity could engage and matters of land were secondary or even superfluous to this need to engage with Jewish ideas for the purposes of apologetics.[43] This is also the case when it comes to contemporary Christian engagement with Judaism.

For Christian theology, the Incarnation too is located in history and place. The consequence of Biblical theology giving greater attention to Judaism’s

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[42] Clare Amos, *Peace-ing Together Jerusalem*, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2014, p. 62f.
[43] W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1974, p. 4f.

connection to the land is that Christian understandings of the doctrine of the Incarnation also must give greater prominence of the particularity of place. Meanwhile, the Church lives out its faithfulness in the corporeal reality of place and is always holding in tension the universal and the particular.

When it comes to the specifics of a particular land, how a people account for their place in that land, also tells us much about their theological account of themselves. Dorian Llywelyn links the existential crisis of the late 20th century with the search for rootedness and "place" with an other-worldly reality (what he calls "extra-historical heaven") and a tangible, specific and particular place that is imbued with holiness.[44] In the case of Israel and Palestine we also have to take account that not only is this politically contested land, but is also the context of a theological anthropology that is also contested. The Jewish yearning for return to their ancient homeland, which is itself a theological anthropology, tells as much about identity of Judaism in the modern world, as it does about a political aspiration for self-determination. This question we will examine more closely in a later chapter. Meanwhile Jewish-Christian dialogue, as developed in the 20th century, arises out of an encounter between two theological anthropologies that are European in context. Christianity had to come to terms with the horror of the Shoah and accusations of ecclesial and theological complicity. Jews however came to see the State of Israel as central and even contingent to their post-Shoah identity.

[44] Dorian Llywelyn, *Sacred place, chosen people: Land and National identity in Welsh Spirituality*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999, pp. 1f.

For Palestinian Christians, questions of identity and land are closely related. Palestinian theological anthropology's concern with land also presupposes questions of suffering and justice as they struggle to find their place in Arab society and determine God's bounty in the midst of military occupation. Palestinian theology rarely leaves aside the place of land, and thus it too a theological anthropology, but with a very specific context and application. In Chapter 3 we will examine Palestinian thought in more detail, however as a preliminary step it will be necessary to give an account of Palestinian Christianity, its ecumenical and inter-religious context and how it relates to land.

All of this points to an important recalibration of the theological compass: the re-orientation of Jewish self-understanding towards the East compels Christian theology to consider the implications of what we are describing as the easterly tilt in the Jewish-Christian encounter.

1.5 Tilting Eastwards

Ecclesial power verses a wandering and blamed people frame the discourse the Jewish-Christian encounter; it is one of Christian power versus a vulnerable and victimized people. Since the Shoah, Western Christian theology has embarked on a revisionism that seeks to address what we might caught theologies of contempt. And this has been the strongest theme of

Jewish-Christian dialogue in the Western world—one of reconciliation, partnership and even sibling affection.

However, the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, as a fulfilment of Zionist aspiration, has created another Jewish-Christian narrative, one whereby the power relation has been reversed, where Jews are the majority and Christians for the first time exist in a minority status with a Jewish political hegemony. Yet a continuing but small Jewish presence exists as a permanent part of Western society with history casting its long shadow and so the European story of Jewish-Christian relations continues to pose its critical questions. The Jewish-Christian encounter retains the narrative of the vulnerable Jew and the need to eradicate theologies of contempt, but a newer reality entered the conversation, that of the powerful Jew in a modern Jewish State.

How then do these two accounts—one European, the other Middle Eastern—relate to one another? How is the encounter and dialogue to take account of the Jewish-Christian experience in the Holy Land, and thus it is not Jewish presence, but also Christian presence within a dominant Jewish political hegemony?

This matter of presence has brought Judaism and Eastern Christianity (and Islam) into encounter, more often in an atmosphere of threat and confrontation. Nevertheless, an accurate understanding of Christianity in the Middle East will be critical to apprehending this new theatre of encounter.

This thesis will begin the task of addressing many of these concerns that are posed by the easterly tilt of the Jewish-Christian encounter and will note an "ecclesial turn" in Christian discourse that is more conscious of Eastern

Christianity, and a “theological turn” in Jewish-Zionist thought in respect of the land as it seeks to find a language that connects people to the land.

Chapter 2 is the first stage in describing this new theatre of encounter. It concerns Jewish-Zionist thought in relation to the land and why there has been an “easterly tilt” in the Jewish-Christian encounter: the geographical, political and eventual theological shift in Jewish self-understanding from a people seeking to make its home amongst the nations of the world, to an understanding of itself as a nation within the family of nations, rooted in the land of its ancient belonging: Israel. Being a people that sought to find a home in the nations in which they found themselves required an acceptance of their minority status, and often a degree of subjugation: The Jewish-Christian encounter is rooted in this context. Zionism is the radical turn in Jewish self-understanding that began as a minority movement amongst European Jews, to become the principal phenomenological framework for Jewish identity. Having outlined this historical trajectory we will turn to the two central themes of this chapter: the place of Masada in Israeli consciousness and the subsequent development of Levantinism as a school of thought. The plight of the Jewish rebels against Roman rule on the summit of Masada entered into the popular imagination of early Zionist settlers and became a powerful image for the new emerging State of Israel. However, the limitations and difficulties of using Masada as a symbol of national defiance will lead us to examine the so-called “Mediterranean option” or Levantinism in the work of Israeli essayist Jacqueline Kahanoff and the Israeli historian David Ohana, in whose work the “theological turn” in Jewish thought will be most apparent.

Having established the geographical and theological relocation of Judaism in the latter part of the 20th century, Chapter 3 examines Palestinian Christianity within its Middle Eastern context. This begins with a description of the historical and ecclesial nature of Eastern Christianity. It will elucidate the relationship it has with Islam as the primary religious other for Christianity in the Middle East as the critical reality of Christian self-understanding in the Holy Land. Having described this background, we then turn to explore Christian theology in a Palestinian context and how it has applied itself to contemporary political and religious context in the Holy Land, focusing particularly on the writings of the Lutheran theologian Mitri Raheb whose work illustrates the "ecclesial turn" in Christian thought that raises new questions for the Jewish-Christian encounter. In fact, what will be uncovered is an aspect of the new theological space into which the Jewish-Christian encounter is emerging whereby Palestinian theology and ecclesial self-understanding will be axiomatic to the dialogue between these two faiths.

The fourth and final chapter turns to the theological space into which the Jewish-Christian encounter is stepping into, explored through the work the South African-born Israeli Jesuit Fr David Neuhaus, a writer whom we will describe as a "thinker in motion" in that his reflections arise from the distinctive pastoral relationship he has with Christian churches and their ecumenical relationships, Muslims and Jews as well as the Latin Patriarchate in which he is situated. The critical issues that will emerge here are how "land" has become a central question for Jewish-Christian dialogue and whilst the older questions concerning matters of "covenant" and "salvation" are still

current, they take on a unique particularity when considered in context of the easterly tilt.

It is a manifest quality of the Jewish-Christian encounter that it wrestles with theological questions that always find their way back to historical events that are charged with emotion in the face of injustice and suffering. It is in these contexts of extreme tribulation that Jews and Christians often seem to have an inexhaustible determination to find a language that speaks to the moment, and as the axis of that dialogical encounter tilts towards Jerusalem fresh and urgent questions for Jews and Christians will emerge.

Having outlined the trajectory of Jewish self-understanding, we now turn to the central question of this research and establish the nature of Judaism's re-territorialization that has brought about the easterly tilt.

CHAPTER 2

The Theological Turn in Jewish thought on the Land:

From the Significance and Limitations of Masada,

to the Levantinism in David Ohana's Study and Expansion of Jacqueline Kahanoff

2.1 Introduction

Judaism finds its place in the contemporary world through the aspirations of Zionism. Even of those Jews that question Zionism, politically or theologically, Zionism is an unavoidable reality with which they have to engage. And in the Jewish-Christian Encounter Zionism is the unavoidable reality because Jewish self-understanding is inextricably bound up with Zionism as the means by which Jews find their place in the world and as such expect those with whom their encounter, especially in dialogue, to take seriously this important part of their ethnic and religious identity.[45]

But what is often overlooked in this self-evident religious and political reality is the geo-political and ideological relocation of the Jewish people, carrying with it a theological relocation of Judaism. The establishment of the State of Israel thus brought about a physical relocation of the Jewish-Christian encounter

[45] For different Jewish perspectives on Jewish identity and Zionism, see for instance: David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition: An Ancient People Debating its Future*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000; David Novak, *Zionism and Judaism: A New Theory*, Cambridge, 2015; Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009; Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*, London: Scribe Publications, 2014; Robert Wistrich and David Ohana (eds), *The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma*, Abingdon: Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1995; Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, Cambridge, 2002, transl. 2005.

from Europe to the Levant. But the implication of the relocation of the locus of the Jewish-Christian encounter is that the Levant itself is more than a political context but is also a contested theological space. In some ways it always was, for the names of places are imbued with theological significance and lie deep within the theological and spiritual memory and imagination, but the relocation of Judaism to this geographical context has meant that the theological encounter between Jews and Christians is narrated into an emerging theological space in the Levant. Thus, there is also a "theological turn" in the Jewish-Christian encounter, whereby Judaism's geographical and political relocation raises new questions for Christianity's theological encounter with Judaism which can sometimes demonstrate a tendency towards self-narration.[46]

This chapter will seek to establish several features of this geographical tilt towards the East: (1) The recasting of the Jewish people from a European minority, with Christianity as the primary religious other, to a Jewish State and significant regional power with its own Palestinian population, and a military power in occupation of the West Bank and Gaza with its largely Palestinian population. (2) That Judaism, through Zionism, finds itself located in a land where Palestinians are embedded in the parallel contexts of the Islamic and Eastern Christian worlds. (3) That Zionism, as the overarching national *Leitmotif*, is a European originating nationalism with many different manifestations, yet Israel has also become the home to large numbers of

[46] There is a "theological turn" in Jewish thought that relates to Judaism's new identity in terms of the land of its ancient belonging. For aspects of the theological turn in Judaism, see *Modern Theology* Volume 39, Issue 2 2023 Special Themed Issue: New Work in Jewish Theology Pages: 197–373, https://onlinelibrary. wiley. com/toc/14680025/2023/39/2 (accessed 25/05/2023); E. C. van Driel, "Incarnation and Israel: A Supralapsarian Account of Israel's Chosenness," *Modern Theology* (2023), 39: 3–18.

Mizrahi Jews[47] who now make up around 60 percent of Jews in Israel, and they have a different history and identity to that of European (Ashkenazy) Jews. (4) That this relocation of the heartbeat of the Jewish people poses important questions as to the primary religious other in this Eastern context and its implications for Christian theology and its engagement with Judaism.

These four features run alongside the two main themes of this chapter, (1) the importance and limitations of the Masada story and its role in Israel's national self-understanding, and (2) Levantinism as a body of ideas that is rooted in the work of Jews of mostly Mizrahi heritage. The scholar who accompanies this chapter as it enquires into these matters is David Ohana, an Israeli historian, born in Morocco of mixed eastern Jewish parentage and who teaches at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. His areas of interest have been in post-Romanticism, the intellectual roots of totalitarianism, the emergence of the State of Israel and the implication of Zionist intent in the land and latterly some of the theological currents in Jewish religious and political self-understanding as they manifest themselves in the 21st century. In particular we will be focusing on his work on Levantinism, especially his commentary on the work of Egyptian born Israeli writer Jacqueline Kahanoff and his most recent work on some of the theological concerns: this research therefore is dialoguing with an emerging paradigm within Jewish-Zionist thought.

[47] "Mizrahi"—literally of the East is used to refer to Jews who are descendants of the Jewish communities of the Middle East, including Iraq, Syria, North Africa, Yemen, Turkey and Iran and is sometimes includes Jews of Central Asia. Mizrahi differs from Sephardi in that the latter refers to Jews of Spanish and Portuguese descent although Sephardi is sometimes used as a colloquial term for non-Ashkenazy Jews and its also worthy of note that Mizrahi rabbis fall under the jurisdiction of Sephardi chief rabbinate. It is estimated that Mizrahi Jews account for more than 60 percent of Jews in Israel itself.

2.2. Zionism: Definitions and Historical Context

History and memory are central to Jewish self-understanding and the challenge for the non-Jewish reader is to understand this from a Jewish perspective rather than the interpretative overlay that derives from other sources, and this is particularly the case for the Christian tradition that views Judaism through the lens of the New Testament.[48]

The Hebrew Scriptures are fundamentally the story of a people in relation to the covenant. But special attention needs to be given to the features of the remembering of the history. This is both a theological and geo-political history. It is about a people's relationship to God and their place, through the covenant, in the salvation and redemption of creation. But this particular people is also located in a particular land and whilst scripture is multi-vocal as to the precise nature of the borders of this land, it is never the case that the covenantal promise to this people is divorced from the corporeal reality of its landedness.[49] However, the particularity of this people's history and memory are not merely ancient remembering, framed by scripture, but a narrative of a people with a yearning to return to the land, amidst often hostile environs where any sense of rootedness seems temporary or fragile.

Thus, the memory of a people is always related to the land, even amidst the harshest experience of being far from it. And such harshness is integral to the shared memory of a people who are formed by covenantal remembering

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[48] See further Rabbi Tony Bayfield (ed.), *Deep Calls to Deep: Transforming Conversations between Jews and Christians*, London: SCM Press 2017, pp. 137–171; Jacob Neusner, *Judaism When Christianity Began: A Survey of Belief and Practice*, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

[49] See further, Edward Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 148–154; also David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition: An Ancient People Debating its Future*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

(most fully articulated in the Feast of the Passover). The act of remembering is formative of a people's contemporary identity and consciousness, but that memory is always being re-evaluated and challenged both from within and without. This chapter will be a enquiry into how Zionist thought on "land" has played its part in forming a national consciousness, pointing to how this has fundamentally changed Jewish self-understanding, and how this impacts upon the overall focus of this research, namely how Jewish-Christian dialogue has been affected.

Beginning with a brief introduction of the emergence of Zionist thought in 19th century Europe, this chapter is primarily concerned with the place of "land" in aspects of Zionist thinking in the 20th century and how aspects of Jewish Messianism have played a significant and developing role in Zionist discourse. In particular we will explore Zionism's relationship to the land through a developing collective memory in relation to the ancient site of Masada and subsequent thinking that has evolved as a result of some of its shortcomings, especially what came to be known as the "Mediterranean option". Finally, we will explore some of the attempts at Christian responses and, more broadly, how Jewish perspectives offer theological challenges to Christian self-understanding. These are some of the questions that will be explored in this research. We begin with an exploration of aspects of "land" in relation with Jewish-Zionist thought. This is focused specifically upon secular, political Zionist thought, including the historical and philosophical roots of this aspect of Zionism, culminating in a discussion of one particular geographical place, that of Masada, as a means to understanding the significance of the land in Zionism, and also some of its ambiguity and moral dilemmas that go to

the very heart of contemporary debates about the Israel-Palestine conflict but also explain why Zionism, and the State of Israel, is a theological challenge as well as a political one for Christianity.[50]

2.3 Zionism and the Aspiration for home

David Ohana observes that there is something unique about Zionism in that it was born in Europe but found fruition in Palestine and therefore its early pioneers, thinkers and artists were firmly rooted in a European context. These "Israeli modernists", as Ohana calls them, were born and nurtured in Europe, but who brought their thinking to fruition in British Mandate Palestine and later Israel.[51] The 19th century European context was an acute and increasingly vulnerable one faced by Jews. In the German speaking context, the late romantic yearning was for "Heimat", a German word that has no exact translation into English, often rendered "home" or "homeland"; it came to symbolize the aspiration of self-determination and pride in the place of belonging, often most vividly expressed through the many nationalisms that sprang up during late Romanticism. For Jews this raised fundamental questions about their own identity and future in a culture where other identities

[50] This however runs the risk of a conflation of meanings between what is Judaism and what is Israel. The ambiguity within Jewish thought where Israel has clear Biblical and liturgical functions and an eschatological reality that is not always synonymous with current political realities, yet the shared language can encourage such conflation. It is the identity of a single individual, a people, a geographical land and a nation, in both its ancient and modern manifestations. In the book of Genesis Jacob is given the name "Israel" to indicate the manner in which he has striven with divine and human beings and it becomes identified with the later Jewish kingdom, as well as that of a people. In Christian theology "Israel" denotes both the Old Testament people with a covenant is made and also what is understood to be the new continuing reality of the Church.

[51] David Ohana, *Modernism and Zionism*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 23f.

and nationalisms were asserting themselves. The Jewish and Viennese composer Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) underlined this crisis:

> I am three times with a Heimat: as a Bohemian in Austria, an Austrian among Germans and as a Jew throughout the world—always an intruder, never welcomed.[52]

Movements of self-determination were emerging across Europe and in many cases would lead to the establishment of nation states that would become firmly established in the 20th century. Late romanticism was its driving force, via philosophy, literature and music. In Italy, the wars of independence from Austrian rule between 1848 and 1866 became an inspiration for Jews who were coming to the view that their struggles to exist as a tolerated minority were insufficient. German reunification and its sense of national and cultural pride became an inspiration for Austro-Hungarian Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) who saw a model for Zionism.[53] Herzl was to be become a key figure in what we might call "classical Zionism"—the secular liberation movement of the Jews that sought a homeland where Jews could find their own self-determination. Herzl was an assimilated Jew by background, with a career as a journalist and a playwright in Vienna. Herzl came to believe that antisemitism was not something that could ever be overcome. In fact, he viewed it as a social disease from which Jews could only ever escape through

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[52] Norman Lebrecht, *Why Mahler? How One Man and Ten Symphonies Changed the World*, Anchor, Ill: Anchor Books 2011 p. 24.

[53] See further discussion on the relationship between early Zionism and European Nationalisms, Hedva Ben-Israel, "Zionism and European Nationalisms: Comparative Aspects", *Israel Studies* Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 99–104 (Indiana University Press); Aidan Beatty, "Zionism and Irish Nationalism: Ideology and Identity on the Boarders of Europe", http://www. academia. edu/23768294/Zionism_and_Irish_Nationalism_Ideology_and_Identity_on_the_Borders_of_Europe [accessed 10/09/2016]—article forthcoming in the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*).

a struggle to be truly free. It was only by being a people that directed their own destiny that Jews would be truly accepted in the world. In his pamphlet The Jewish State, published in 1896, he argued that Jewish subservience in Europe was no longer a viable option for Jews. He convened the first Zionist Congress in 1897 and appealed for help both to the German Emperor Wilhelm II and Sultan Abdul Hamid II, offering initially a plan for a Jewish homeland in Uganda. His vision was a liberal, humanitarian one, rather than revolutionary or religious, and probably more than any other figure at this time paved the way to what would become the modern State of Israel.[54]

Herzl's tireless efforts were driven by a Jewish sense of homelessness in Europe that was doubly felt: living in countries that sought self-determination, yet in a world where the Jew is welcomed nowhere:

> To the living, the modern Jew is dead, to the native-born he is a stranger, to the long-settled a vagabond, to the wealthy a beggar, to the poor a millionaire and exploiter, to the citizen a man without a country, to all classes a hated competitor.[55]

Influenced by Hegel's philosophy of historical progress, Herzl maintained that for Jews to remain a landless people without any ownership of their own destiny, they would remain atypical of other peoples who were seeking their own freedom and self-determination. Believing that Europe could never be a permanent *Heimat* he advocated the orderly exodus of Jews from Europe.

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[54] See Schlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, Philadelphia: Basic Books, 1981, pp. 93–105; *Herzl: Theodor Herzl and the Foundations of the Jewish State*, London: Phoenix Books, 2008.

[55] Words of Leon Pinsker (1821–1891) quoted in Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*, London: Penguin Books, 1971, 1983 edition, p. 70.

The Dreyfus affair is commonly viewed as a major trigger for Herzl's conclusion as to Jewish destiny.[56] Schlomo Avineri contests this, however, arguing that within the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, facing challenges from various, and sometimes competing nationalisms, Jews would always be vulnerable and could only survive by developing a polity for their own. He points to the fact that the Dreyfus affair only merits scant reference in Herzl's diaries and that Herzl declares his main interest to be the origins of Zionism which he saw as lying within Germanic culture. Herzl was one of the first to observe the increasing fragility of the Hapsburg Empire, which in the 20th century would precipitate a continental conflagration. The attempts to pacify nationalist movements led to cultural accommodation, such as the toleration of languages within the empire other than German, which in turn led to assertions of German cultural supremacy, with more than a hint of the Aryan superiority that was to grip Europe in the middle of the 20th century with devastating results for European Jewry. The assertions of Germanic superiority led to the formation of associations that were barred to all who did not seem Germanic enough, and this meant even Jews who had converted to Christianity and been baptized. Avineri suggests to us that most historians disregard the attempts of the Hapsburg Empire to liberalize its polity in order to dampen rising nationalisms which in turn precipitated growing Germanic assertiveness that fatally weakened the Jewish sense of being at home in the

[56] Regarded as one of the major miscarriages of justice in French legal history, it concerned the conviction of a French army captain of Jewish heritage, Alfred Dreyfus on charges of treason and espionage, a conviction later overturned after Dreyfus has served nearly 5 years in the French penal colony known as Devil's Island. Dreyfus' conviction was widely seen to have been motivated by antisemitism and divided opinion across France. See further: Eric Cahm, *The Dreyfus Affair in French Society and Politics*, London: Routledge, 1996; Yoram Mayorek: "Herzl and the Dreyfus Affair" in *The Journal of Israeli History* Vol.51.No.1 (1994), pp.83-89; Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2014, pp.16ff.

land that was Austro-Hungary. Herzl from his home in the Empire's capital, Vienna, observed all this. The contrast for Zionist thought would be Jewish fragility in one land translated to Jewish security in another land. Amos Elon observes that Herzl, like Pinsker before him, had been driven not by a "secularized version of the ancient religious yearning for the land of Zion. His was a rescue operation, not a movement for national revival on historic soil", a call which was reiterated in the First Zionist Congress of 1897. Herzl died in 1904 and was succeeded as the leading Zionist thinker by Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952). Weizmann, who was to become the first President of the State of Israel, was born in the Russian Empire but later moved to Britain and came to play a critical role in the Balfour Declaration seeing the light of day.

This was part of the wider historical context of European antisemitism.[57] The restrictions upon Jews, where they could live, the occupations they could enter, the schools and universities they could attend, led many to conclude that assimilation was the only course open to Jews in Europe. For some this meant conversion to Christianity, whilst for others it meant embracing all aspects of the country in which they lived. Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), the German-Israeli philosopher and historian, describes how during his upbringing in Berlin, Christmas would be celebrated by his family, with a Christmas tree, roast goose or hare, and even an aunt playing "Stille Nacht" on the piano, and marked by them not as Jews but as Germans.[58] Scholem

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[57] A term first coined in the 1870s by the German journalist Wilhelm Marr. The history of anti-Semitism is documented in numerous sources, including See further, Alan Dundes, ed. (1991), *The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic* Folklore, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991; Hannah R. Johnson, *Blood Libel: The Ritual Murder Accusation at the Limit of Jewish History*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012.
[58] Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of my youth*, Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 1980, 2012, p. 28.

subsequently chose to spend his Christmases with an uncle, more positively disposed to Zionism, even though his parents had made an attempt to accommodate their son with a photo of Herzl beneath the Christmas tree! Scholem is in many respects a crucial figure for Zionism, and Judaism's place within the State of Israel. He is best known for his work on Jewish mysticism (he was the first Professor of Jewish Mysticism at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem) and is generally regarded as the founding scholar in the study of Kabbalah, but he is also remembered for his memorable comment that that by leaving Europe behind Jews were stepping out of world history in order to re-enter Jewish history. As Nathan Rotenstreich underlines:

> In this formulation, Zionism is not a matter of relocating Jewish existence from one set of conditions to another; it is a historical watershed, and the emphasis all the radical nature of the change is accompanied by a parallel emphasis on the wretchedness all Jewish existence heretofore. [59]

And for Scholem Zionism was not merely a political movement—indeed he often expressed hostility to the notion of the modern national state—but one that arose out of Jewish history and mysticism. It is interesting to note that the revival in interest in Jewish mysticism walks alongside the revival of the Jewish sense of themselves as a people who desire their own determination. This presence of mysticism in Zionist intent is therefore key to understanding

[59] Nathan Rosenstreich, "Gershom Sholem's Conception of Jewish Nationalism" in Paul Mendes-Flohr (ed.), *Gershom Sholem: The Man and His Work*, Stet University of New York Press, 1994, p. 107. This sense of "stepping out" of history is bound up with his German-Jewish heritage from which he was keen to escape yet never fully realized that aspiration. See further, Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of My Youth*, Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2012; Gay Howard Geller, "From Berlin and Jerusalem: On the Germanness of Gershom Scholem", *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 35, No. 2, June 2011, pp. 211–252.

the presence of Judaism in the world today, which in and of itself hints at a "theological turn" in how Judaism is to be apprehended in the contemporary world.[60]

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 expressed a positive sentiment towards creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine "without prejudice to the civic and religious rights of the existing population". It was not a formal government document but a letter from the Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour (1848–1930). Balfour, who had been Prime Minister (1902–5), addressed his letter to Lionel Walter Rothschild (2nd Baron Rothschild), honorary president of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain:

> Dear Lord Rothschild,
>
> I have much please in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which have been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet. "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."
>
> I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.[61]

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[60] See further, Gershom Scholem, ed Werner J. Dannhauser, O*n Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books Inc, 2012.
[61] Quoted in Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 149.

As Gudrun Krämer notes, this letter was carefully crafted, not referring to the whole of Palestine, and using the hitherto unknown term “national home”, which would lead to wide and far-reaching interpretations that did not acknowledge any obligations on Britain. Speaking to the Peel Commission,[62] the Prime Minister at the time of the Declaration David Lloyd-George, subsequently stated that the interpretation at the time was that a Jewish State would not come into being without the acquiescence of the majority of the inhabitants of Palestine, but if, by virtue of the Declaration, Jews became the majority, Palestine would become a “Jewish Commonwealth”.[63]

The Balfour Declaration arose out of a context of growing interest in the Near East by the competing European powers, particularly Britain, France, Prussia and Russia. Russia was primarily concerned with Constantinople, Britain and France with their own colonial interests of the Near East and North Africa. The Balfour Declaration may well have been part of a wider strategic interest in the Middle East, and the possibility of Jewish support in rival nations may have been pivotal in the Declaration seeing the light of day.[64]

One should further note that Balfour has a theological as well as political dimension: Balfour was the son of an observant Scottish Presbyterian and whatever the political motivations behind the Declaration, Balfour himself belonged to a Reformed and Evangelical tradition, whose *sola scriptura* emphasis had led many from the 17th century onwards to see the restoration

[62] The “Palestine Royal Commission” headed by Lord Peel, sought to understand the causes of social and political unrest in Palestine during the British Mandate and reported in 1938.
[63] Krämer, *History of Palestine*, pp. 150f.
[64] Naomi Shepherd, *Plough Sand: British Rule in* Palestine, London: John Murray Publishers, 1999, pp. 7ff; Martin Gilbert, *Churchill and the* Jews, London: Simon and Schuster, 2007, pp. 27ff; Danny Gutwein, “The politics of the Balfour Declaration: Nationalism, imperialism and the limits of Zionist-British cooperation”, *Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 35, 2016—Issue 2, pp. 117–152.

of the Jews to the Holy Land to be a matter of profound theological importance. Historian Christopher Hill has described the profound shift in English ecclesio-political context whereby the Bible shifted from being a sacred text in Latin to being in English, what Hill refers to as a “huge bran tub” out of which any number of unquestioned truths could be drawn even though they might contradict one another.[65] The Christian Zionist movements of the 18th and 19th century had considerable political influence and Balfour should be read within this context. The Balfour Declaration therefore should be understood not only within its British Imperial context but also the Protestant/Evangelical impulses that were immensely strong at that time.[66]

Meanwhile Britain and Prussia jointly established a bishopric in Jerusalem.[67] From the 1840s a movement aimed at the “restoration of the Jews”, led by Lord Shaftesbury, gained momentum in Britain.[68] However, the restoration movement was not the only, or even predominant, motivation for the Balfour Declaration, with strong political agendas a significant factor. The Balfour Declaration that was, to some extent, the realization of the restoration movement, has cast a shadow over the politics of the region ever since, for whilst it spoke of not prejudicing the civic and religious rights of the indigenous

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[65] Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*, London: Allen Lane, 1993.

[66] Christian Zionism has often been viewed by Jewish Zionists as a natural ally. See for instance Gordan and Ohana “Restorative Utopias” who regard Calvinism and Evangelicalism (which they equate together) as more naturally sympathetic to Jewish self-determination than the Catholic tradition which they equate with Replacement Theology.

[67] See Sybil M. Jack, “No Heavenly Jerusalem: The Anglican Bishopric, 1841–83”, *The Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, December 1995, pp. 181–203; Patrick Irwin, “Bishop Alexander and the Jews of Jerusalem”, *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 23 (1984), pp. 317–327.

[68] “The Restoration of the Jews” movement had strong roots within the Anglican tradition. For a recent Anglican survey of Christian Zionism, see *Land of Promise? An Anglican exploration of Christian attitudes to the Holy Land, with special reference to Christian* Zionism, London: Anglican Communion Network for Inter Faith Concerns, 2012.

population, Balfour himself in 1919 spoke of Zionism having more importance that the “desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit the ancient land.”[69]

Whilst Zionism was at this time gaining support amongst European Jews (including significant numbers emigrating to Palestine), it was still largely opposed by many larger Jewish organizations, most notably the Board of Deputies of British Jews who opposed the sentiments behind Balfour.[70] Brian Klug has detailed the different Jewish responses to the Balfour Declaration as “Zionism, Binationalism and Antisemtism”.[71] It was the rise of the National Socialists in Germany and the ensuing Holocaust that propelled Zionism from a minority view to the dominant contemporary Jewish narrative. And thus there was an historical trajectory that came to place returning to the land of promise as an inseparable part of what it means to be Jewish in a post-Holocaust world.[72]

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[69] Alexander Schölch, “Britain in Palestine, 1838–1882: The Roots of the Balfour Policy”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXII, No. 1 (Autumn 1992), pp. 39–56. See also Mayir Verté, *From Palmerston to Balfour: Collected Essays of Mayir Verté* (ed. Norman Rose), Frank Cass, 1992; Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine*, Chapter 7. That same year Balfour was to remark that the creation of the League of Nations should promote the idea of equality of peoples, because it was unimaginable that “a man from central Africa could be regarded as the equal of a European or an American.”

[70] Prominent Jewish leader Edwin Montagu argued at the time that a Jewish homeland in Palestine would provide a pretext for countries to expel their Jewish populations and that it further implied that Jews were not contributors to European society and culture.

[71] Brian Klug, “Zionism, Binationalism, Anti-Semitism: Three Contemporary Jewish Readings of the Balfour Declaration”, *Journal of Levantine Studies,* Vol. 8. No. 1, Summer 2018, pp. 85–100.

[72] See further, William M. Matthew, “The Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate, 1917–1923: British Imperialist Imperatives”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, 2013—issue 13, pp. 231–250.

2.4 Establishing the new Heimat

The right to immigrate or "right of return" *(aliyah)* is regarded today as a non-negotiable aspect of Israeli national identity, enshrined in the Law of Return, passed in 1950, guaranteeing the right of every Jew to emigrate to Israel. The very word "return" emphatically connects aspirations of the present to the ancient Biblical promise. However much (what we might call) classical Zionism is secular and even anti-religious in character and intent, it drew is inspiration from a collective memory of people intimately associated with the land.[73] This land was one of "promise" to whose return would turn a page in Jewish history to one defined and determined, not by divine obligation or intervention, but by human intent. Zionism came to mean Jews taking ownership of "the land of promise" with all the sense of liberation, triumph, tragedy and moral ambiguity that would come with return.

Ari Shavit is an Israeli journalist who has served in the Israeli Defense Force, a graduate in philosophy from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and has served as the chairperson of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and a member of the editorial board of *Haaretz*, an Israeli newspaper noted for its liberal and left-wing stances on most issues, both domestic and foreign. His 2014 book *My Promised Land: the Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*[74] became an immediate bestseller and was seen to be addressing many of the issues

[73] The Hebrew word "*aliya*" is used in relation to the return of Jews in the diaspora to the Land of Israel. The word literally means "to go up" is echoes strong the language of the Bible "let us go up the mountain of the Lord". Whilst this was enshrined in the Law of Return, Aliya predates not only this law but also the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Historians have generally talked in term of five waves of Aliya prior to Israel's creation: the first two during the Ottoman Period (1882–1903; 1904–1914) and three during the British Mandate Period (1919–1923; 1924–1929; 1929–1939).

[74] Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: the Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*, London: Scribe Publications, 2014.

and questions in relation to Judaism and the Land that were utmost in the minds of many Israelis.

Shavit is indicative of the wider corpus of Jewish belief that *Haaretz*–the Land of Israel as integral to Jewish self-understanding.[75] But he notes that Zionism represented a significant break with previous Jewish self-understanding. Up until the turn of the 20th century, Jewish identity was framed by what Shavit describes as the two 'g's—God and ghetto. Critical to the survival of Jewish identity was a closeness to God and their detachment from the non-Jewish world. However, this was never likely to be tenable in the long term. Zionism represents a fundamental shift in Jewish self-understanding, and it is of note that nowhere in Herzl's writings is there any discussion of the theological justification of the trajectory of Jewish national destiny. This is illustrated in Shavit's discussion of his great-grandfather, the Rt. Hon. Herbert Bentwich (1856–1932), a wealthy English Jew, born in Whitechapel in East London, who was drawn to Palestine at the end of the 19th century, and would become a legal advisor to the British Mandate. This was at a time when Palestine was seeing a gradual increase in its Jewish population. Yet the interest in Palestine, at least for wealthier Jews, was not only an expression of Jewish identity and the way in which it was developing but also arose out of an identity both as a Jew and a Victorian gentleman, suggesting that Zionism itself was, in part, born out of principles of European romanticism. But the antisemitism that was on the rise in Europe was leading many, both those

[75] Various contemporary Jewish writers have explored the importance of Israel to Jewish self-understanding: including Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009, pp. 131–153; David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition: An Ancient People Debating its Future*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

driven by political and philosophical considerations and by those with a more European romantic bent, towards a new understanding of what it meant to be Jewish in the world—one firmly rooted in political reality and indeed, history.[76]

The notion of "Jewish return to history" is significant in this context. Attributed to Scholem, it was bound up with the idea that Jews were freeing themselves of the constraints placed upon them by external forces and thus not in control of their own destiny. The "wandering Jew" of Christian polemic thus becomes reversed, as the Jew of apparent perpetual wandering has returned to the land from which it was allegedly banished. Thus, the return to the land, and "return to history" is a post-Romantic subversion of medieval ideas of the accursed Jew. Yet Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin's observation, that it essentially colludes with Christian characterizations of Jews, suggests that the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is not annulled by the "return to history" but enters a new era.

Palestine therefore became a place of emigration by, at first small, numbers of Jews, who purchased land from the indigenous population in order to make a new life, far away from European antisemitism. These early settlers in Palestine were often socialist in outlook (after early attempts to create a more bourgeois settlement by the Jewish middle classes). Many of these were the originators of the Kibbutz movements which Ari Shavit characterizes as communities in rebellion against: (1) a daunting Jewish past of persecution and wandering; (2) a mouldering Jewish past of a people living unproductive

[76] Shavit, *My Promised Land* p. 8f.

lives at the mercy of others; (3) Christian Europe; (4) Capitalist world order; (5) Palestine's marshes and boulders; (6) Palestine's indigenous population.

He then speaks powerfully of Zionism as a movement of orphans—orphaned from Christian Europe and the culture to which Jews had contributed.[77] It is often assumed that Israel is a consequence of the Holocaust, yet the sense of the “orphans of Zion” dates from before the Second World War. It was defined in part by the First World War, seen by many Jews as Armageddon with the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 taking on almost Messianic status.[78]

Thus, Zionism arises out of a European context, and out of a Jewish sense of its relationship to it, rather than a Jewish devotional and pietistic response to the way it read its own destiny through scripture. It is its cultural, philosophical and political context that is critical and is deeply rooted in that of European romanticism: the sense of the indomitable human spirit struggling against powers to achieve the almost impossible.

This important strand of Romanticism has many literally allusions, most particularly in the figure of Prometheus, the Titan of Greco-Roman mythology who struggles to free himself from the chains that bound him. The Jew of the ghetto who seeks to free himself from their chains to achieve the almost unattainable does not take place in isolation—it is but one manifestation of the contextualization of European romanticism. It becomes clear why early Zionism took on the character that it did for the roots of Zionism in this period are cultural not religious. It was not driven by a hermeneutical impulse or

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[77] Shavit, *My Promised Land*, pp. 33ff.

[78] See further, Enzo Traverso, *The Jewish Question: History of a Marxist Debate*, Leiden: Brill, 2018, pp. 127–135; Laura Engelstein, “Antisemitism in Late Imperial Russia and Eastern Europe through 1920”, in Steven Katz (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitis*m, Cambridge University Press 2022, pp. 325–339.

scriptural warrant but by a Promethean determination to be free from chains that had bound Jewry for centuries: Christian antisemitism certainly, but also Jewish acquiescence and acceptance of their ghettoed status. The ghettoed status for many went hand in hand with theism and the image of the Jewish man in a European ghetto immersing himself in the study of the Torah and Talmud was one from which early Zionism were determined to escape. One such figure was Yitzhak Tabenkin (1888–1971), one of the founders of the Kibbbutz movement; he had emigrated from the Russian Empire to Ottoman ruled Palestine in 1912, a socialist who rejected the notion of a Jewish State that resembled other nation states, preferring instead grassroots movements rooted in notions of equality and shared ownership, and a Middle East as a union of communist peoples:

> Even when he rails against Judaism, he does so as a Jew. Even when he rises up against religion, he rises up religiously. There is so much God in the godless Tabenkin as he assaults God and dismisses God and tries to create a God-free, godless world.[79]

This early (pre-State of Israel) period is clearly seminal in the formation of the new Jewish identity as it emerged into history. The ghettoized ethos of the "two 'g's" in Christian Europe had rendered European Jewry almost with a neutered status, but in the new settled communities in Palestine, and in

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[79] Shavit, *My Promised Land*, p. 42. Tabenkin, like many of his contemporaries offer, through their own personal journey a good deal of insight into early Zionism in Palestine: born in what is now Belarus in 1888, emigrated to Ottoman Palestine in 1913, it was his socialism that inspired him to be one of the founders of the Kibbutz Movement. He represents an important strand in Zionism that was not motivated by religious conviction but by political intent, yet did not reject Jewish Scripture; on the contrary his own support for the Movement for Greater Israel (which sought to annex further lands for settlements of Jews from outside Israel) was often justified by reference to scripture, and especially the Torah. This ambiguity with regard to hermeneutics often leads to an assumption that early Zionism's motivation was driven by religious scriptural literalism, thus mirroring movements of Christian Zionism.

particular the Ein Harod Kibbutz (co-founded by Tabenkin), Jews had been transformed:

> And as the ploughs begin to do their work, the Jews return to history and regain their masculinity … They transform themselves from object to subject, from passive to active, from victims to sovereigns.[80]

This vision of a muscular, masculine Zionism is a particular theme in this period of Zionism and against which future generations would, in part, react against. But it was indicative of a Zionism that was determined to transform Judaism from the characterization of a weak and subservient people, to one that was defined by strength, courage, tenacity and power. It would also come to define much of the how the later Jewish State would emerge.

The early Ein Harod Kibbutz experience might suggest to us what "holiness" might mean in Zionist thinking about the land. Having rejected both "God and ghetto" that had rendered Jewry virtually impotent, a new sense of a people whose flourishing identity, whose destiny is now determined by Jews themselves and finds its raison d'être in the Land that is inseparable from it. To put it another way, the significance of the land in Zionist-Judaism is that it provides inevitable and irreversible context for Jewish emancipation. This is the realization of the vision of Herzl, who saw Jews taking their place among other peoples seeking self-determination for their own nationalisms, and is a rejection of both the passivity of European Judaism that would settle for fragile and even temporary belonging in land that was not theirs, and the radical

[80] Shavit, *My Promised Land*, p. 35.

socialist alternative of Tabenkin that sought a different kind of rootedness in land that rejected the nationalist search for a Jewish *Heimat*.

What makes this inevitable and irreversible is that the earlier Zionist pioneers had somehow sensed the impending disaster that was about to befall European Jewry: thus realized Zionism in Eretz-Land of Israel becomes not only the salvation of the Jewish people but also their triumph.[81] This sense of triumph and salvation is why for most Jews, Zionism has become intrinsic to Jewish self-understanding. Yet this was not always envisaged in terms of a modern state that is Israel today: Tabenkin parted company with Ben-Gurion, rejecting political Zionism that sought the creation of a "nation among other nations", choosing instead the kibbutz of Ein Harod which was socialist, practical, down to earth. It was a communist vision of Palestine as one working class commune.[82]

But the Israel that would emerge would be formed as much by external forces as by Jewish determination and vision. How would the new Jewish identity in the land respond to external, existential threat? And Scholem poses another important question:

> Was Zionism a revolution in the life of the Jewish people, a rebellion against the latter's existence in the *galut*, which it negated radically in order to inscribe on its banner an equally radical new beginning in the land of Israel; or was it rather to be understood from the perspective of an awareness of historical continuity, as a continuation and evolution of

[81] Shavit, *My Promised Land*, p. 52.
[82] Shavit, *My Promised Land*, pp. 38ff. See also Yehiam Weitz, "The Positions of David ben Gurion and Yitzhak Tabenin viz-à-vis the Holocaust or European Jewry", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 5, Issue 2, 1990, pp. 191–204.

> those forces that have determined the existence and endurance of the Jewish people even during the long years of the dispersion?[83]

This radical new life needed a new language and new symbols around which to unify a people no longer, it would seem, in dispersion, but newly located in the land of its Eastern longing. What symbols would be embraced? Would the ancient place of Israel's cultic practice—the Jerusalem Temple Mount—be that place or was there to be another visceral symbol of Jewish defiance in the Land? This is where the hitherto neglected events at Masada hundreds of years previously comes to be of critical significance.

2.5 Masada as Place of Zionist Particularity

We have already noted Amos Elon's assertion that for Herzl and other early Zionist pioneers, they were not driven by a burning desire to bring to fruition a secularized notion of the ancient religious yearning for a return to Zion, but rather an urgent imperative to rescue European Jewry. Their prophetic sense of impending doom, which they accurately read in the runes of unfolding European history, became more than a reality of the darkness of the 20th century and so for Jews who had made, or who were making their exodus to Palestine, there was the question of how one should live in the land with permanency and what narratives would sustain and strengthen the rootedness in the land.

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[83] Gershom Scholem, "Israel and the Diaspora" in Werner J. Dannhauser (ed.), *Scholem*, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2012, p. 248.

One might have imagined that Jerusalem would form an important part of how Zionism would weave its narrative of landedness, yet a far more potent symbol became that of the ancient site of Masada which would gain symbolic notoriety of the will and determination never again to succumb to external forces, even those vastly superior in military strength. The adage "Masada shall not fall again" would come to define Israel at critical moments in their history. The precise significance, as well as its moral ambiguity, will now be explored.

(i) Masada and National Myth Making

Masada, the ancient fortification in the Judean desert overlooking the Dead Sea, was the site of the legendary siege by the Roman armies in 73–74CE against the Sicarii Zealots that, according to the historian and chronicler Flavius Josephus (37–100CE), resulted in the mass suicide of the zealots rather than fall into Roman hands. For centuries Masada represented for many Jews the folly of political and religious zealotry. But in the 20th century, amidst the threat posed to the early Zionist settlements and to the subsequent State of Israel, Masada attracted fresh interest. This initially came from the poem "Masada" by Yitzhak Lamdan (1899–1954)[84] which was published in the 1920s and describes the Jewish struggle for survival amidst a hostile world. Ohana points out that this is part of a much wider corpus of Jewish poetry between the First and Second World Wars that had more that a hint of

[84] Lamdan, born in Ukraine, rendered homeless as a result of the First World War and roamed Southern Russia before joining the Red Army and eventually moving to Palestine during the Third Aliya (1919–1923). He was awarded the Israel Prize for literature in 1955. The text of the poem can be viewed at: http://allpoetry. com/Masada (accessed 03/02/2018).

Jewish Messianism and with strong themes of masculinity to which we have already referred.[85] The “Masada” poem is also significant in that, as Benjamin Kedar informs us, references to Masada in Jewish literature in past centuries are scarce (there is no mention in the Talmud or the Mishna) and only reappears after the Jewish pogroms in Ukraine in 1927 with Lamdan’s poem.[86]

With numerous deadly attacks on Jewish settlers in Palestine in the 1930s, the idea of an embattled Jewish people who will nonetheless hold out even to death was viewed in marked contrast to the Jews of the past who had surrendered to the power of antisemitism, even and especially, the Holocaust. The most famous line in the poem “Masada shall not fall again” expressed both the determination of Israel never again to be defeated, but also implied a fatalism, a political nihilism, that had no concept of an existence that was now framed by conflict with otherness.

Yet it also suggested that Israel might be a trap for Jews: as the new Masada, Israel could become the place where Jews would face their final confrontation with more than a suggestion of inevitable defeat and national self-immolation. The suggestion from David G. Roskies that Lamdan’s poem inspired the Warsaw Ghetto uprising further underlines the moral ambiguity that the Masadan model encapsulates.[87] Furthermore, the sense of apocalyptic, even eschatological, destiny is already hinting at a theological turn away from the

[85] David Ohana, *Modernism and Zionism*, Palgrave Macmillan 2012, p. 87.
[86] Kedar is quoted by Jacob Talmon, see David Ohana (ed.), *Jacob L. Talmon: Mission and Testimony: Political Essays*, Eastbourne: University of Sussex Press, 2015, pp. 271ff.
[87] “Archaeology in Ancient Israel: Masada Desert Fortress”, https://www. jewishvirtuallibrary. org/masada-desert-fortress [accessed 28/10/2018].

secular, humanistic Zionism of Herzl, to one that is edging towards theological themes.

The events of the 1940s come to focus Jewish minds and why Masada is transformed from a model of futile and destructive national zealotry into a compelling icon of Jewish identity, defiance, survival and redemption. Jews in Palestine not only faced growing hostility from indigenous Arabs who felt their land was being annexed, but Zionist leaders were all too aware of the Wehrmacht's advance across North Africa and that, were the Red Army to fall at Stalingrad and the Crimea lost, Palestine would be caught in a pincer movement.

Zionist leaders, such as Shmaryahu Gutman (1909–1996), a Scottish born Jewish settler, were all too aware of some of what was befalling Jews who came under Nazi rule and could see what was becoming a genuine possibility: that Jews would be trapped in Palestine.[88] Gutman became enthralled by the potential symbolism of Masada and resolved to climb to the summit with a group of young Jews. His climb to the summit reflected the task of Zionism: fraught with danger, yet only by pressing on, in spite of all that threatens it, will Zionism survive and achieve its goals.

Ari Shavit makes this observation:

> (Gutman) has always known that at its core Zionism embodies conflict. Yet he always believed in the desperate energy of Zionism. He

[88] Guttman, of Russian-Jewish parentage who moved to Palestine when he was three years old. Prior to the Second World War he served as Jewish emissary to Jewish communities in eastern Europe with the task of persuading them to move to Palestine. He was also involved in diplomatic efforts to bring Iraqi Jews to Israel and in the 1960s and 1970s he would return to Masada for the archaeological excavations.

> believes that the essence of Zionism is momentum—never to retreat, never to rest, always to push forward. The new Hebrews must push the limits of what the Jews can do, of what any people can do. They must defy fate.[89]

What is particularly striking in the accounts of the story of Gutman's embrace of the Masadan myth is their almost Messianic overtones. Gutman, like many of his Zionist contemporaries, was a secular figure with a mystical bent. His mission is one to save a defeated nation and not wait for an eschatological Messianic age.[90] The Messianic resonance of the Zionist impulse is confirmed by Rabbi David Hartman who suggests that in spite of the secular (and sometimes anti-religious) motivations of early Zionist thinkers, many saw religious significance in the creation of Israel in 1948. One might suggest that Zionism's intent on a "stepping back into Jewish history" was also stepping into a new language of political theology. Indeed, many religious Jews saw in the creation of Israel the providential hand of God, or God's redemptive scheme and Hartman points out that most religious Zionist students are taught to understand Israel in a religious, even messianic, context. Hartman himself uses words such as "theological" and seeks to develop a paradigm of understanding of the significance of Israel in religious terms without making messianic or even eschatological claims for Israel's relationship to God.[91]

Gutman's ascending Masada is certainly a personal commitment but also one undertaken with a group of young Jews, including the young Shimon Peres (1923–2016) and future Prime Minister and President of Israel, and called

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[89] Shavit, *My Promised Land*, p. 84.
[90] Ibid., p. 118.
[91] David Hartman, *A Living Covenant*, pp. 278ff.

"disciples" by Shavit. The Zionist determination to go up to the summit of Masada in spite of the implications that such a place offers might suggest to a Christian reader significant sub-Christological echoes. Shavit suggests a paradox at the heart of Zionist Masada: how a secular figure seeks to transcend modernity and secularism with a modern secular icon and creates an almost secular form of mysticism that will help sustain Zionism in its determination to save Jews and Judaism.[92]

And as the young men and women that accompanied Gutman dance on the summit of Masada, Shavit further comments:

> He knows that Zionism has no church and no theology and no mythology. He knows that Zionism is on the brink and needs a poignant symbol that will be a substitute for church and theology and mythology. In Masada he finds this symbol that will unite and inspire Zionism's followers. He finds a pillar for Zionist identity that is at once concrete, mythic and sublime. In Masada, (he) finds both the narrative and the image that will give the young Hebrews the depth they lack. Masada will captivate them, empower them, and galvanize them for the challenge ahead. This tragic mountain will give meaning to their struggle. In the name of Masada the dancing boys and girls will fight the cataclysmic war that will save Zionism and save the Jews.[93]

With the advance of Rommel towards Alexandria and the alarming news coming out of Europe of a mass pogrom against Jews, Masada becomes a central symbol of developing Jewish identity. With the slaughter of Jews in

[92] Shavit, *My Promised Land*, p. 86.
[93] Ibid., p. 88.

Europe (by 1943 Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary was declaring that the Nazis were systematically exterminating Jews) there seemed no alternative but the new Masada that was Palestine. Masada might be the name of the last place of Jewish resistance against the Romans, but what was to become Haaretz-the Land of Israel would become the new Masada that comes to symbolize the resistance, pride and survival of a people against all odds. However, there is another aspect of the Masadan idea that is important for Israeli state building: Masada as a symbol of supreme resistance was in contrast to the symbol of the Holocaust which emphasized submission and victimhood.

This symbolic contrast was in many ways heightened by the trial in Jerusalem of Adolf Eichmann in 1961: Eichmann had been successfully traced in South America by Israeli intelligence and brought to Israel to face justice, where the victims of the Holocaust have evidence against him thus bringing into public prominence the painful remembrance of a dark time of Jewish victimhood. Furthermore, Guy Harpaz and Elisha Jacobsen outline how this symbolic contrast has impacted Israeli government policy towards external funding of domestic NGO's in Israel.[94] But in the formative period of Israel becoming a modern nation state this determination to shake off the victim status that had overshadowed European Jewry would also impact upon how key elements of Jewish mythology would take on new, political symbolism. In this regard

[94] Guy Harpaz and Elisha Jacobsen, "The Israeli collective memory and the Masada Syndom: A political instrument to counter the EU funding of Israeli non-governmental human rights organizations", *Mediterranean Politics*, 22. 2, 257–277, DOI: 10. 1080/13629395. 2016. 1151136.

Ohana points to the demythologized interpretation of the Akkedah ("The Binding of Isaac"):

> It is a vital discourse touching the very heart of Israelness. The collective consciousness that accompanied the rise of the State of Israel embodies the Israelis' view of themselves. Unlike their parents in the exile (and particularly in the Holocaust), they wished no longer to be victims of a fate decided by others … Israeli culture in its early stages had this self-image of someone independent who was accountable to himself alone. Paradoxically, the renewed Jewish sovereignty was expressed this time by the independent capacity of the Jews to send their children to be sacrificed. It was a national sacrifice. The willingness of the Israelis to sacrifice their children or themselves of the altar of the nation reflected the attitude of a young people ready to pay the price for its independence … It is undoubtedly a sacrifice, they said, but it is we that do the sacrificing, not the gentiles. As a result, the Akkedah or sacrifice of Isaac was seen in the early stages of Israeli culture as representing a voluntary national act, not a passive Jewish fate.[95]

Masada is a critical aspect of collective Jewish consciousness in Zionist narrative. The adage "Masada shall not fall again" is often used in Israeli discourse and for a period of time was the place in which Israeli soldiers swore their final oaths of allegiance. The body of literature written on the

[95] David Ohana, *Nationalizing Judaism: Zionism as a Theological Ideology*, London: Lexington Books, 2017, p. 4.

subject of Masada is considerable and therefore our focus will be upon what it tells us about Jewish-Zionist relationship to the land.[96]

Years later, Gutman, the very same figure who had scaled to the summit of Masada, served as the military governor at Lydda, an Arab city 15km southeast of Tel Aviv and at the very centre of what is modern day Israel, and is close to the present site of Ben-Gurion International Airport. Lydda witnessed a massacre of some of its Arab population and most of the inhabitants were expelled from the city in 1948. The expulsion order came from no less than David Ben-Gurion, signed by the future Prime Minister and architect of the Oslo Accords, Yitzhak Rabin and implemented by Gutman, the man who was so intoxicated by the newly found Masadan symbolism.

Shavit describes Lydda as Zionism's "black box": the data that explains the present predicament that is the Israel-Palestine conflict, or the title of his book Israel's "triumph and tragedy". The *Nakba* (or "tragedy") as it is known amongst Palestinians,[97] is not frequently discussed by Zionist writers, but for Shavit it is critical to understanding the Israeli story as much as the Palestinian one. The "tragedy" that stands alongside the "triumph" is that for Zionism to survive the forces that assailed it, it became necessary to remove most of the Arab presence from much of the Tiberias-Safed region. This

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[96] The corpus of literature on the subject of Masada, in Hebrew and English includes (in English): Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Chicago, 1995; Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*, Madison, 1995; and *Sacrificing Truth: Archaeology and the Myth of Masada*, New York and Amherst, 2002; Shaye Cohen, "Masada: Literary Tradition, Archaeological Remains, and the Credibility of Josephus", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982), pp. 385–405; Robert Alter: "The Masada Complex", in *Commentary*, June 1973; M. Pfaffl, "Narratives of Bravery and Fear. The Masada Myth", *Forum Archaeologiae*, 55/VI/2010.

[97] "*Nakba*"—literally "catastrophe"—a term used in Palestinian writings to refer to the loss of Land to Israel, forced refugee status, massacres and statelessness that resulted from the 1948 war.

involved the destruction of villages, the displacement of peoples and, in some cases, massacres. Shavit seeks to acknowledge the truth of this without apologetic plea yet explains this in terms of the mind-set of those Zionists who had lived through the dark times in which Masada had become such a potent symbol for Zionists such as Gutman. But as he narrates the events of demolitions and killings, he comments that the other casualty is the dream of socialist-Zionism that emphasizes a humility, a sense of doing right and acting for the greater good.[98]

The Land therefore becomes not only the context for triumph against adversity but also a place of tragedy. But the tragedy is part of the story of the triumph. In relating in intimate detail the conflict in Lydda, involving massacre and mass expulsion, Shavit relates the belief of Gutman that without the events in Lydda, Zionism would have failed.[99] Furthermore, it will be the contention of this research that it is the competing land narratives that are encapsulated by the tragedies of Shoah and *Nakba* that are framing a new chapter in Jewish-Christian relations, and in this regard, Gutman is an intriguing and compelling figure.

(ii) Masada, Zionism and European late Romanticism

Masada as we have seen is a critical part of Zionist narrative and its development of a collective historical memory. To place this in philosophical context we turn to the contemporary Israeli writer David Ohana. Ohana was born in Morocco and moved to Israel in 1956 when his family made *aliya*,

[98] Shavit, *My Promised Land*, p. 116.
[99] Shavit, *My Promised Land*, p. 127.

settling in the northern Negev town of Kiryat Gat. His doctoral research was completed at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1989 which was followed by a period as a post-doctoral fellow at the Center for European Studies at Harvard University. He later founded the Forum for Mediterranean Cultures whilst serving as senior fellow at the Jerusalem Van-Leer Institute (1990–2000) and is now Professor of History at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He has written extensively on issues of identity and Israeli nationhood and its relationship to European culture.[100]

Late Romanticism was in part concerned with the struggle of the individual against the constraining influence of religion and state, aristocratic as well as ecclesiastical power and authority. Reaching its peak in the mid-19th century, Romanticism would also lay the foundation of the nationalist movements that grew with such fervour at the end of that century. Zionism has its roots in such nationalist movements of this period.

However, it was not only political nationalism that influenced the development of Zionism, other aspects of European Romanticism were also important. Shavit alludes to this in the ethos of the earlier Zionist workers who struggled against the Land in order to subdue it. The sense of these early settlers discovering anew their masculinity has ironic Wagnerian overtones, struggling to overcome powers both human and divine, in order to attain the ultimate prize: the gold that would transform the Jewish people from subjugated peoples expelled from history, into a proud people whose destiny was firmly in

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[100] Ohana's work in English include: *Political Theologies in the Holy Land: Israeli Messianism and its critics*, London: Routledge 2010; *Israel and its Mediterranean Identity*, New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011; *The Origins of Israeli Mythology: Neither Canaanites nor Crusaders*, Cambridge, 2012; *Modernism and Zionism … The Nihilist Order: The Intellectual Roots of Totalitarianism*, Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2016.

their own hands. But just as in Richard Wagner's mighty quartet of musical dramas, there is darkness and danger that threatens the long term destiny of those that succeed in the romantic aspiration to overcome that which assails it.

Pointing to its enlightenment and romantic roots, Ohana notes that Zionism represented Jewish history's first modern ideology. Ohana speaks of Zionism as a "Jewish Promethean passion" which attempts to recreate a secular collective Jewish identity, influenced by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). This Promethean revolution was led by "Hebrew Nietzscheans", refusing to submit to the kind of determinism that prevailed with regard to economics or history, and especially the prevailing mood of European antisemitism. This return to the land, was also a return to history and was a rejection of a Judaism of passivity that had prevailed in Europe characterized by Talmudic scholarship and assimilation, and instead sought to take control of Jewish destiny and place in history. As Ohana states, more than anyone else, Friedrich Nietzsche was the philosopher who personified this rebellion and its need for a "new man".

At this point we might want to make a couple of more general observations. Firstly, Prometheus[101] became a key literary figure in the Romantic movement, epitomizing the struggle of the individual against forces both political and religious. Thus, we find Prometheus in the writings of Shelley, Goethe, Byron, Mary Shelley and latterly Kafka. The Promethean figure becomes associated with the very essence of the Romantic ideal. Secondly,

[101] In Greek mythology, the god who created humanity, stole fire from Zeus and gave it to human beings. As punishment he was bound to rock from which he sought to free himself.

as already alluded to, the very Romanticism than gives birth to Zionist ideals is also, paradoxically, the movement that accelerates the development of the overtly vicious form of antisemitism that swept out of Germany to almost annihilate European Jewry.

Ohana suggests that there is an inevitability of Zionism as an outworking of the Enlightenment and of Romanticism. Nietzsche becomes a critical thinker, whose writings have considerable influence upon younger Jews, rebelling against a Jewish culture that emphasized “books” over “life”, and therefore drawn to Nietzsche’s withering assessment of European civilization as tired and decadent and needing revitalization and a “will to power”.[102]

In fact, Ohana points to existentialism’s significant influence upon Zionism, particularly Martin Buber (1878–1965) and Gershom Scholem. For Scholem it was important to reject the sense that Judaism was antithetical to the mystical aspects of religion, and this included the importance of the role of myth. In this Nietzsche proves to be a significant influence. In his youth Scholem had even spoken about being a “Zarathustra for the Jews”.[103] And its important to note that, in relation to Nietzsche, there are a number of important Jewish thinkers of the 20th century who write about existentialist themes, these include Buber,

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[102] Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), known for his initial advocacy of the music of Richard Wagner (1813–1883), and the popularity of his ideas with German National Socialism in the 20th century, yet, unlike Wagner and other contemporaneous literary and cultural figures he was often well disposed to Judaism, much more so than Christianity. Furthermore, he has seen a degree of rehabilitation and re-evaluation in Zionist writings. See Michael F. Duffy and Willard Mittelman, “Nietzsche’s Attitudes Towards the Jews”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 49 No. 2 (April-June 1988), pp. 301–217, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; Jacob Golomb (ed), *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997; David Ohana, “Zarathustra in Jerusalem: Nietzsche and the New Hebrews”, *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 1 (1995), No. 3, 22, pp. 38–60.

[103] Ohana, *Origins*, pp. 46. Ohana also places Scholem within the wider context of historians of religion such as Mercia Eliade and psychologists such as Karl Jung who stressed the importance of the role of myth.

whose book *I-Thou* has been theologically influential within Christian as well as Jewish writings, Scholem, primarily a historian of kabbalah but also significant (as we have seen) in the intellectual framing of Zionism and other such writers of importance such as Franz Rosenzweig and Emmanuel Levinas.

The philosophy of Nietzsche therefore becomes a significant, if surprising, influence upon early Zionism. His emphasis upon the "will to power" and the importance of myth in culture and civilization more than echo the early Zionist spirit: a movement that sought to free Jews from assimilation and antisemitism in Europe and to transform a compliant and emasculated people into one that struggled against history, political power, even the land itself and especially its indigenous inhabitants of Palestine, in order to regain an ethnic masculinity. In this context we perhaps understand the impetus and intentionality with regard to the re-forging of a Masadan consciousness.

For many Zionists, notes Ohana, this meant realizing this through practical ways that are rooted in the land.[104] Nietzsche's appeal to early Zionists contains an inherent logic. Nietzsche came to believe that post-Enlightenment Europe had outgrown all that Christianity had taught and represented, but in declaring "the death of God" he was not pointing towards a rationalistic, secular humanism, but the need to enter a new chapter in human spiritual and intellectual development, and to that end needed to create a new sense of human beings taking control of their own destiny and creating their own myths

[104] Ohana, *Origins*, p. 48f.

that would sustain them spiritually.[105] Zionists too were reacting to a Christian Europe that held them in chains for too long, and longed for an intellectual framework for Jewish self-determination.[106]

(iii) Appraisals and Critiques of the Masadan myth

Since Masada entered into the Israeli national mythology it has been re-evaluated and critiqued by numerous Israeli scholars and in particular what Jacob L. Talmon called "the Masadan complex".[107] They not only question the historical veracity of the way the events of 73–74CE unfolded but also in the manner in which the myth has operated in Israeli national consciousness. The sociologist Nachman Ben-Yehuda points out that the way in which 20th century Zionism had made use of the Masada incident is at variance with the only ancient source, that of Josephus, for whom the Sicarii were assassins and a violent group, despised by most contemporary Jews and who had murdered and plundered from their own people. He therefore challenges the accuracy of the basis of the Masada ideal. Having said that the veracity of Josephus is not beyond reproach given that Josephus had switched from the

[105] It was for this reason that Nietzsche praised Wagner for utilizing old Nordic and Germanic mythology in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and also why he denounced him after the overt Christian symbolisms of his last opera *Parsifal*.
[106] Arguably Judaism has been more receptive to Nietzsche's ideas than Christianity. Unsurprising given Nietzsche's hostility to Christianity. This point is noted by Don Cupitt, who observes that Christian theological interest in Nietzsche has been marginal, at least in the English-speaking world. See D. Cupitt, *Radical Theology*, Minnesota: Polebridge Press, 2006, p. 122f.
[107] Jacon L. Talmon (1916–1980) was an Israeli historian, and Professor of Modern History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who had studied at that university during the British Mandate period. His main contribution is around totalitarianism and "political Messianisms" which he traces to the French Revolution. For his comments on the "Masadan Complex", see "Reflections on an Historian in Jerusalem" (1976), re-published in David Ohana (ed.), *Jacob L. Talmon, Mission and Testimony: Political Essays*, Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2015, pp. 262–278.

Judean to the Roman side in the Jewish War and wrote his history from a Roman standpoint. Other sociological approaches have analyzed the myth in terms of classical Durkheimian approaches that look at the functional role of the myth in Israeli society, particularly in respect of integration and social cohesion. Others, most notably the historian Bernard Lewis,[108] have pointed to the need to construct a national narrative, what Lewis calls "invented history". Meanwhile there are those such as Anita Shapira who point to the way in which the myth has helped to legitimize forms of violence.[109] And perhaps more fundamentally, as we have already observed, "Masada shall not fall again" hints at an almost cosmic conflict where Jews will always be vulnerable to attack from external forces, and that a Zionist consciousness is its only hope of salvation. As Ben-Yehuda observes, Lamden's poem "conveys a sense of tremendous hope and optimism but also of concern, despair, anxiety and anguish."[110] Further difficulties are highlighted by the glorification of an apparent act of mass suicide and the modern-day glorification of suicide bombing in some Islamist discourse.

Jacob Talmon cautions against neurotic fear which he declares is always "a bad advisor":

> It brings out the hastiness of extremism, and it prevents rational, sober evaluation of the ever-changing components. It beclouds analysis of the long-ranged constants of security. It dulls vigilance for opportunity.

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[108] Bernard Lewis (1916–2018), a British-born American historian of the Middle East who is now generally characterized as an "orientalist". He has published widely on the history of Islam and is also noted for his debates with American-Palestinian literary critic Edward Said.
[109] See Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995, pp. 14ff.
[110] Ben-Yehuda, p. 221.

> It engenders apocalyptic sentiment and raises a compulsive longing for as test similar to Masada or the one that Samson underwent. It spreads mystical modes of thought. When in an exacerbated mood, we seem to hear only the categorical imperative—the challenge of martyrdom. One no longer relates to the circumstances of the here and now or the needs of the future.[111]

David Ohana has explored the theme of the Jewish people as victims of external powers and how this has impacted upon a developing Jewish (Zionist) consciousness and the holiness of particular sites. He draws attention to two narratives that are both "umbilically" connected to Zionism and its most serious threat: the "Canaanite" and "Crusader" narratives. The "Crusader" narrative associates Zionism with Western colonial expansionism, whereas the "Canaanite" views Zionism only in terms of the land and territory, and thus breaking free of historical continuity.

> The Zionist ideology was part of the modern enterprise. It represented the Promethean passion of western man, which meant being one's own master, rebelling against the fate decreed by one's history, being able to mold the future, to create a society independent of existing circumstances. At the heart of modernity—that is, behind the Promethean passion—there is the assumption that man is stronger than the place. The claim of Zionism as modern movement was that the new Jew who had left Europe would conquer the place and would mold it to his measure.

[111] D. Ohana (ed), *Jacob L. Talmon. Mission and Testimony: Political Essays*, p. 281f.

It is for this reason that both the Crusader and Canaanite narratives are a serious threat to Zionism: the former will lead to the degradation and defeat of its existing inhabitants and later risks turning into an extreme nationalistic ideology.[112]

Given what we have learnt thus far it is important to note how the Masadan model has undergone revision and has been challenged in recent years. Nachman Ben-Yehuda's work, whilst challenging the consistency of Josephus' account with Zionist discourse, has also sought to offer an alternative model, one contemporaneous with the ancient events of Masada. He offers the figure of Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai who, like Josephus, had defected to the Roman side, but unlike the historian is not regarded as a traitor. According to the Talmud, after flattering the Roman general, Vespasian with (accurate) predictions of his future as Pontifex Maximus, pleaded successfully for the creation of a rabbinical academy in the village of Yavneh. Ben-Zakkai's Jewish consciousness was of a more quietest disposition that the Sicarii who perished on Masada and he successfully established a renewal of spiritual Judaism and an alternative to religious zealotry that remained in the Land even after the destruction of Jerusalem and the suicide on Masada. It was because of his role in ensuring a continued Jewish scholarly tradition that he is often call "the father of wisdom" and the "father of generations (of scholars)".

The alternatives of the Sicarii and Ben-Zakkai offer a glimpse into the vexed dilemmas that lie at the heart of Zionism and its relationship to the Land.

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[112] David Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology: Neither Canannites nor Crusaders*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012 (first published in Hebrew in 2008), p. 1ff.

Theodore Sasson and Shaul Kelner chart the changes in Israeli narratives around Masada, focusing upon field research undertaken with tour guides on Masada itself. In the early Zionist period in Palestine (mid-twentieth century) the story of Masada was romanticized, but in subsequent years a more nuanced and critical reading came to be offered. This is witnessed at a popular level when a tour guide on Masada demonstrates how the shouting of "Masada shall not fall again" only carries across the valley when it is uttered in unison by multiple voices and not a single voice (thus emphasizing the essential collective memory and action that is at the heart of Zionism) but also in the telling of Ben-Zakkai's story, and stating that were it not for Ben-Zakkai, the Jews would not have survived.[113]

Sasson and Kelner make a critical point about the Masadan narrative that, in Zionist discourse, it is predicated on the belief that the ontological threat to Israel is an external one. As we have seen, when Gutman made his ascent to the summit of Masada the threat was indeed external, both in terms of Nazi advance and hostility from indigenous Arabs. However, towards the end of the 20th century the ontological threat came to be seen to come from within Israel as well as from without. The events of the 1990s and beyond were to challenge the idea that the ontological threats were only external: the Baruch Goldstein massacres, assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by a (Jewish) Israeli and military incursions into Gaza. In this account, Masada comes to symbolize the dangers of religious zealotry, messianic militarism and ideological absolutism: the Sicarii of ancient times

[113] Theodore Sasson and Shaul Kelner, "From Shrine to Forum: Masada and the Politics of Jewish Extremism", *Israeli Studies*, Vol. 13, number 2, 2008/07/01, pp. 146–163.

were extremists who had waged war on their fellow Jews that had resulted in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Rabbi Ben Zakkai therefore comes to be seen as the counter narrative that will enable Jews to counter ontological threats, both internal and external, the third era of Jewish sovereignty in the Land.

Sasson and Kelner's conclusion is that Masada has moved from being an unassailable shrine to a forum whereby the issues of politics and collective memory are stated and debated is well made. It is once again a reflection of a profound and sometimes cathartic debate within Judaism about survival of a people in the face of its own history.

Masada is for the most part of internal Jewish-Israeli debate and Christian theologians and writers are almost entirely silent on its significance for Judaism in the 20th century.[114] The emphasis for Christian theology in a post-Holocaust world was largely focused on theological revisionism in the face of "the teaching of contempt". Whilst churches undertook this vital task, in partnership with Jews, Judaism was exploring what it meant to "step back into Jewish history" in the land of its ancient heartfelt yearning for which Masada became an early compelling symbol. One theologian who was aware of the symbolic importance of this ancient mountain fortress was the Anglican bishop, Arabic scholar and Islamicist Kenneth Cragg (1913–2012), although

[114] Although there a large corpus of Christian writings on the wider matter of Zionism itself. See Donald Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, London: Melisende, 2003; Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel-Palestine*, Oxford: Lion Publishing, 2nd Edition 1992; Carole Monica Burnett (ed.), *Zionism Through Christian Lenses: Ecumenical Perspectives on the Promised Land*, Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2013.

his references to it are very brief.[115] Cragg both understood the 19th century roots of Zionism and the place of Masada in Zionist consciousness.[116] Cragg observes that “Zionism has rarely, if ever, celebrated explicit sites” (in contrast to Christianity). The only place that could be regarded as having any vestige of “holiness” within Zionism is Masada, the place where the remnant of Jewish resistance fell to the overwhelming forces of the Roman Empire.[117] Thus the precise nature of the “holiness” lies within the dignity of the story of the Jewish people as victims of external power, yet always determined to resist, even against all odds.[118]

It is striking that Cragg uses the word “resurrection” in terms of Masada as symbol of Jewish liberation, and whilst this is not an exclusively Christian word (there is a strong Jewish tradition of an understanding of resurrection) he nonetheless (deliberately or inadvertently) points to a resonance with Christian atonement theology. There are of course dangers in attempts to

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[115] Cragg’s published work is mostly concerned with his interest in Islam and Arabic culture. However, he is also interested in Judaism particularly as it relates to the geo-political concerns and how they affect the lives of Arabs and as such discussion of aspects of Judaism and Zionism in particular are scattered through his vast corpus of published writings.
[116] The aim of (Jewish) Zionism to be a place of return for Jews has strong echoes with the movement known as Christian Zionism. They are often viewed as being part of the same movement whereas in fact Christian Zionism predates Jewish Zionism and it does not always follow that Christian Zionists are well deposed to Judaism as a thriving faith tradition; for many Christian Zionists the return of Jews is merely a means to an end, namely the hastening of the eschaton and the second coming of Jesus. See further Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Politics of Apocalypse: The History and Influence of Christian Zionism*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2006; Robert O. Smith: “Toward a Lutheran Response to Christian Zionism”, *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, Fall 2009, Vol. 48, Issue 3, p. 279–291; Elizabeth Phillips: “We’ve read to the end of the book: An engagement with contemporary Christian Zionism through the eschatology of John Howard Yoder”, *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 2008, Vol. 21 Issue 3, p. 342–361; *Land of Promise: An Anglican exploration of Christian attitudes to the Holy Land, with special reference to Christian Zionism*. Anglican Communion Network for Inter Faith Concerns, 2012.
[117] See also Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *The Massada Myth: Collective Memory and Myth Making in Israel*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995; Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Land of Israel: From Holy Land to* Homeland, New York: Verso 2012, p. 96f; Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of* Israel, New York: Scribe Publications, 2013, pp. 71–77.
[118] Cragg, *Palestine: The Prize and Price of Zion*, London: Cassell 1997, p. 84.

Christianize Jewish suffering in the Shoah and yet, as we have seen there are echoes of Christian theological language with regard to the Masadan myth, notably in Gutman's journey, with "disciples" to the summit which is a symbol of suffering and defeat in the eyes of the world, yet which is turned into a resurrection of a people. Cragg suggests that whilst Masada is both a symbol of supreme heroism and defiance it can also be read as a negation of theism whereby God can only be had on human terms and a future can only be embraced if it is forged by human hand.[119]

For Cragg the intriguing quality of Masada is related to understandings of "holiness" particularly as it relates to land. [120] What is uncovered by Cragg's enquiry is that whilst Masada is rightly identified as the nearest thing that Zionism has to a "holy site" (that is in any sense comparable to notions of holy places in Christianity and Islam) Zionism did not incorporate any sense of holiness of "the Land", even with regard to Scriptural promise.[121] Any sense of "holiness" (and Zionist writers do not generally use the term) is implicit in the struggle to survive, in the defiance of powers which seem almost omnipotent. It is in such struggle and victory that Zionism sees its fulfilment, but also, and critically, the redemption of the Jewish people.

But to object, as some critics do, that Josephus is an unreliable historical accompanier and that the archaeological evidence is scant, is to miss the significance of the overwhelming power of the mythic status of the story that

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[119] Cragg, *This Year in Jerusalem*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982, p. 127f.
[120] The main discussion of Masada and Zionism in Cragg's work are to be found here: *This Year in Jerusalem*, pp. 127ff; *Palestine: The Prize and Price of Zion*, London: Cassell, 1997, p. 84f, p. 100f; and most fully in *Faith at Suicide Lives Forfeit: Violent Religion—Human Despair*, Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2005, pp. 47ff.
[121] Kenneth Cragg, *Palestine: The Prize and Price of Zion*, p. 84f.

Josephus tells. Just as the account of Joshua crossing the Jordan has huge narrative excitement for David Ben-Gurion so too does the post-Biblical story of defiance against overwhelming and almost indestructible power. Cragg understands this point and he is probably the only Christian theologian to date who has recognised the significance of Masada in 20th century Jewish-Israeli consciousness.[122] He calls this the "Masada mind" where the Jewish nation resolves to defy the power of the world even if it were to mean national self-immolation. Cragg, however, goes much further in his book of great originality on the question of faith and suicide. He states the significance of the Biblical figure of Samson (who takes his own life and those of his captors), also a figure of fascination and appeal for early Zionists in the land: he draws to our attention that for Samson his struggle was against the people of "Philistia" with its linguistic connexion of the noun "Palestinian". Cragg further emphasises the part of the Masada story whereby the Jews of Masada resolve to be found in death amongst ample provision of food lest the Romans believed they had died on the brink of starvation; they die at their own hands to demonstrate they freely choose death over abuse, subjugation and slavery.

> Masada, as a self-violation of Jews in the vindication of their Jewishness, symbolises the burden that belongs with the contemporary state of Israel in its pursuit of Zionist integrity in danger of a treachery to itself.[123]

[122] It is however alluded to by the Palestinian liberation theologian Mitri Raheb who suggests Palestinian freedom fighters stand in the same tradition as the Masadan martyrs: Mitri Raheb: "Palestine and the Question about God, the other, and the long awaited liberation", in Rafiq Koury and Rainer Zimmer-Winkel (eds), *Christian Theology on the Palestinian Context,* Berlin: AphorismA, 2019, pp. 281–295.

[123] Kenneth Cragg, *Faith at Suicide*, p. 50.

But has Cragg over interpreted the place and importance of Masada? Has he placed too much emphasis on the suicidal nature of the Sicarrii demise and not on the quality of defiance in the struggle against relentless hostile power? It is surely the latter that occupied Jewish minds in the mid-20th century and to some extent contemporary Jewish self-understanding. His treatment of Masada is within the wider discussion of faith and suicide in the light of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001 and how suicide is to be situated within Islamic and other religious traditions. There is a sense that Cragg is forcing the suicidal aspect of Josephus' account against the real intent behind Jewish-Israeli rediscovery of its own inherent heroism and determination to resist its oppressor.

What these considerations might suggest to us is that Zionism is not only a movement of liberation and self-determination, but (and this point may not always be obvious) a challenge to the ancient Christian understanding where Jews were always subservient to Christian culture, and that Jewish theology and spirituality in its quietest ethos had lost any vision of Jews seeing their future in their own hands. The Jewish anti-Zionist writer Mark Bravermann has spoken of Jewish-Christian dialogue as a "fatal embrace" because of its impact upon displaced Palestinians, ironically the Zionism of Herzl and Ben-Gurion would most surely have regarded it as a fatal embrace for very different reasons: it compounds a sense of Jewish relationship to Christianity that is framed by their European encounter rather than in terms of Israel and the land.[124]

[124] Mark E. Bravermann, *Fatal Embrace: Christians, Jews, and the Search for Peace in the Holy Land*, New York: Beaufort Books, 2010.

Meanwhile there are other issues that are raised, in particular the role of Messianism within 20th century Jewish thought and it is to this we now turn.

2.6 Zionism, Political Messianisms and the Land

David Ben-Gurion had stated that Israel came into being “through the power of the messianic vision” and this is an important theme in David Ohana’s work, drawing strongly on the work of historian Jacob Talmon. Israel, and more specifically the Zionism that underpins it, is a product of a political (secular) Messianism which is a development of the Jewish understanding of Messianism. We have so far explored some of the different facets of Judaism’s relationship to the land as expressed in early Zionism. In terms of the Bible, it is inextricably linked with the Land of Palestine. This has a variety of interpretations with debate amongst scholars as to how to evaluate the Abrahamic promise in Genesis, the subsequent Exodus and Joshua narratives, as well as exilic and post-exilic texts and how they should be understood in light of political events since 1948.[125] However, Liran Shia Gordon and David Ohana argue that the Bible and how it is utilized is “a seismograph” for understanding Zionism and in particular later settlers. As they note, the early Zionist figures utilized the Bible to strengthen their claims, yet their impulse was secular. The significant development in Zionism and its

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[125] For explorations of the Land and the Bible from different perspectives, see W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1974, 2nd edition 1994, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press; from a liberal Protestant perspective, Walter Brueggemann, T*he Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2002, 2nd edition; a Palestinian (Lutheran) approach is offered in Munther Isaac, *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centred Biblical Theology of the Promised Land*, Carlisle CA: Langham Monographs, 2015.

relationship to scripture would come after the Six-Day War of 1967 widely viewed by religious Zionists (Christian and Jewish) as demonstrating divine intervention.[126] This is a "theological turn" in Zionist thought: figures such as Herzl were deliberate in avoiding any theological claims as to Jewish emancipation, but in the 20th century theological language came to be more central to Zionist thought and whilst Ben-Gurion and others had a secular intention, this would lay the foundation for later religious Zionist thinking.[127]

The land is also strongly associated with Jewish nationalism, or to put it more precisely, whenever movements of Jewish self-determination emerge, they have had a focus on the Land with Messianism very closely intertwining. The most notable example being Simon bar Kochbar who led the Jewish revolt against the Romans in 132CE and who was regarded by many Rabbis of the time as the long awaited Messiah.[128] This is in contrast to Christian concepts of Messiahship which ordinarily are not associated directly with the Land, yet Gordon and Ohana opine a startling interpretation of religious Zionism's

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[126] Liran Shia Gordon and David Ohana, "Restorative Utopias: The Settlers and the Bible", *Modern Theology* 36:4 October 2020, pp. 719–742; see also David Ohana, *Nationalizing Judaism: Zionism as a Theological Ideology*, Lanham: Lexicon Books, 2017.

[127] The concept of "theological turn" was coined by French phenomenologists such as Dominique Janicaud who critiqued what they saw as a turn towards overtly theological language in the work of philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur. See Dominique Janicaud, Jean-François Courtine et. al., *Phenomenology and the "theological Turn*", New York: Fordham University Press, 2000.

[128] Simon Bar-Kochbar led a revolt against the Roman Empire in 132 CE. Little is known about him however he achieved territorial rule until 135, ruling as Prince of a Jewish Statelet. At its advent, the revolt was perceived by many Jews as heralding the beginning of the Messianic Age but was crushed more than 2 years later by the Emperor Hadrian who banished Jews from the Land and built a new city in place of Jerusalem named Aelia Capitolina. The rule of Bar Kochbar seems to have included most of Judea however it is disputed as to whether this included Jerusalem. Bar Kochbar compelled all Jews to join the revolt, punishing those who did not, including Jewish Christians and this may have been a major contributory factor in the eventual split between Judaism and Christianity to become two separate and distinct religious entities.

theologizing of the Land, suggesting a "Christianizing" of the Jewish tradition with the Land replacing Christ:

> Just as it is Jesus through whom the disciples understand the contradictions and the written words, so the interaction with the Land of Israel becomes a mediator through which the meaning of the Torah is revealed. The incarnation of the holy word within the Land of Israel reveals the deep meaning of the word of God. Just as the Jews are unable to see in Jesus anything other than worship of the flesh, and identify as idolatry the Christian belief in Jesus as the messiah, son of God—in other words, worship of the material—so the opponents of the settlers cannot see in the land its interpretive function and only conceive it as a fetish—a Canaanite form of worship … Just as, for the Christians, the role of Jesus serves as a mediator for salvation, and at the same time develops an understanding of the sacred text, so the land of Israel, is for the settlers, an essential factor for achieving the Messianic goal and it is also an interpreted tool for attaining the deep literal meaning of the holy text. Even if the settlers completely reject that they are neo-Canaanites it is difficult not to notice … their affinity to Christian logic whose internal reasoning mandates a holy mediator in order to achieve salvation.[129]

Stepping over the somewhat polemical nature of this comment, there is perhaps a deeper reflection on the theological turn from secular emancipatory Zionism towards a Zionism more deeply immersed in the ancient relationship

[129] Gordon and Ohana, op. cit., p. 738.

between messianic promise and the particularity of history when it is imbued with religious truth and meaning. Yet Gershom Scholem makes the distinction between the different Jewish and Christian understandings of Messianism and redemption: the former being concerned with the community and its rootedness in history, whereas the latter saw redemption in individual and spiritual terms.[130] Jacob Talmon saw the Christian tradition as having no place for any kind of political Messianism because its theology of universal and individual salvation has superseded all else.[131] Scholem notes that Judaism, in its many varied traditions, interpreted the apocalyptic (Biblical and non-Biblical alike) as both relating to future promise of messianic redemption and also current Jewish plight, with the 'future' redemption anticipated as an immanent reality. Scholem spoke of Jewish Messianism as being essentially "a theory of catastrophe", the historical crises that propel the Jewish people to their messianic future.[132] Ohana highlights the relationship between Messianisms and Jewish movements of emancipation which provide an important context for understandings of contemporary Zionism. Ohana defines messianism as

> … essentially a belief in the perfection of man at the end of days, in a decisive and radical improvement that will take place in the condition of humanity, society and the world, in a final and complete resolution of history… a revolutionary change of order leading all at once to the

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[130] See Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism, and other essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York: Schocken Books 1971, pp. 1ff.
[131] Ohana, *Nationalizing Judaism*, pp. 38ff.
[132] Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe*, London: Verso, 1988, English translation 1992, 2017, pp. 17ff.

> Messianic future, or a linear progress of time from the imperfect present to a better state.[133]

Jewish Messianism is therefore national redemption and salvation and whilst this has an obvious location in history and an implication of geographical location it had a number of different facets. These have been likened to a multi-storey building that has evolved over time, with new stories being added, including spiritual, cosmic, universal, mystical and philosophical. But these different aspects are not independent of one another and with each additional "storey" the character of other "floors" is changed.

This aspect—the ever-evolving nature of Jewish Messianism—is critical to an understanding of contemporary Zionism and why a movement of political emancipation, influenced by other nationalist movements in Europe, came to enter the mainstream of Jewish theology. Ohana traces the movement from "transcendental" to "Promethean Messianism". Prior to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 there had been no attempt to create a political and territorial Jewish State since the fall of the Bar Kochbar revolt. The failure of the Bar Kochbar rebellion, which had been seen at the time as the advent of the Messianic age, was to settle Jewish opinion on its place in the world: minority status, dependent on the benevolence of other rulers, was the only means that Judaism could survive. Ohana describes the Bar Kochba rebellion as "the last act representing a fusion of Jewish sovereignty and the Messianic vision before the exile." The rise of Zionism and its subsequent triumphs in 1948, and particular 1967, appeared to reverse the defeats of Masada and

[133] David Ohana, *Political Theologies in the Holy Land: Israeli Messianism and its critics*, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 1ff.

Bar Kochbar and thus reshaping significantly both Jewish Messianism and Judaism's relation to the Land. Anita Shapira clarifies in the particularity of this in her observation that Ben-Gurion was the first Jewish leader since Bar Kochbar to send young Jews into battle not knowing if they would ever return.[134] This version of Jewish Messianism is a secularized and politicized re-reading of that tradition and Ohana sees David Ben-Gurion's deep fascination with the scriptural roots of Judaism as crucial, especially in the way he incorporated many of its themes into his political writing to the extent that many writers, including and especially Ohana, describe him as a "political theologian". Arguably Ben-Gurion foresaw more than most, seeing the historical trajectory of the Jewish people from events around 1917 (the First World War, the Russian Revolution and the Balfour Declaration) to his accurate prediction, on reading Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, on what Nazism would mean for the Jewish people.[135]

But this is in stark contrast to what had gone before. Ohana refers to this as "Transcendental Messianism" which is essentially spiritually quietist eschatological in character: the redemption of the Jewish people will take place by divine will at the end of history, with the actions of the Jews themselves being limited only to attempts to hasten the coming of this redemption and end time, but ultimately this act is firmly a matter of divine will. Thus, Jewish faith from the Bar Kochbar revolt onwards (forged in the Middle Ages) is characterized as "the passive Messianic faith".[136]

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[134] Anita Shapira, *Ben-Gurion: Father of Modern Israel*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, p. 242f.
[135] Ohana, *Nationalizing Judaism*, pp. 16–22.
[136] Ohana, *Political Theologies*, pp. 4ff.

This passive Messianism, a waiting for a future end-time redemption, would mark the Jews out as distinctive and separate in society. Furthermore, Ohana points out, Jewish Messianism had an historical location and trajectory, namely ancient Jewish polity and later historical instances where Jews attempted a hastening of the Messianic restoration, such as plans to renew the Sanhedrin in the Middle Ages by the sages of Safed in northern Israel, and more recently, the 19th century, attempts by the German rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer to renew sacrifices on the Temple Mount.[137] Yet it was the very hope and expectation of Messianic restoration that would ensure Jewish intentionality as regards ethnic and communal separateness that militated against total assimilation.[138]

All of this underlines an important fact: after the failure of the Bar Kochbar revolt, Judaism did not lose its attachment to the Land, which was kept alive by a continuing Messianic tradition, albeit one that was characterized by a spiritual passivity. The Israel of the Land would one day be restored.

From this "transcendental Messianism" we turn to what Ohana calls "Promethean Messianism" which was

> … not passive or deterministic but was carried by a modern individual who prepared himself and his circle and claimed to form a total world within a particular reality. In the Promethean Messianism, it was human action which brought about redemption.[139]

[137] Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874) might be regarded as a "Proto-Zionist" in that he advocated the re-settlement of Jews in Palestine.
[138] Ohana, *Political Theologies*, p. 5.
[139] Ohana, *Political Theologies,* p.5

It was, he suggests, a "human atomization of redemption" and one cannot understand Zionism without taking account the secular movements of Jewish emancipation in the 19th century that possessed a messianic impulse, albeit of a secularized character.[140] Election, he suggests, was a notion that Judaism gave to the world, but its politicization, especially with regard to Messianism, was something that resulted from external influences upon Judaism. Thus, the events of the 19th century cause a theological crisis with European Jewry: the "passive Messianism" which was associated with religious belief, was evidently not going to allow for the messianic redemption of the Jewish people, hence the emergence of Zionism as a political Messianism that sought to determine the direction of the Jewish people. It is probably not overstating Ohana's position, nor placing words into his mouth, to suggest that Zionism dethroned theism and replaced it with a human desire to liberate a people: Nietzsche's "new man".[141] At the same time, whilst Zionism saw itself as a continuation of Messianism there was a resistance of its founding fathers to be framed in messianic terms. Thus, Herzl was counselled against being perceived as a "Messiah", as would–be-Messiahs had always brought disaster upon the Jews; Herzl himself, speaking to King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy, seemed to relegate belief in the coming of the Messiah to religious circles, and on his own journey to Palestine, Herzl refused to ride a donkey for fear of it being misinterpreted as a messianic

[140] Ohana, *Political Theologies*, p.7

[141] Ohana notes the wider context of late Romanticism of the Nietzschean idea of the "new man": the idea of the "hero" in nationalistic movements: Ohana *Political Theologies*, p.8f. See also David Ohana, "Zarathustra in Jerusalem: Nietzsche and the 'New Hebrews'", in R.Wistrich and D.Ohana, *The Shape of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory and Trauma*, Abingdon, Oxon: Frank Cass and Company, 1995, pp.38-60

claim.[142] On this later point, whilst references to the Messiah riding a donkey are to be found in Hebrew prophecy, this also illustrates the extent to which Herzl, and therefore early Zionism, was overshadowed by Christian notions of Messiahship.

Later Zionists would also evoke its connection to Jewish Messianism. David Ben-Gurion was criticized by many within Israel in the 1950's for his use of Messianic language, fearing that it might in time undermine the secular democratic ideals of Israeli society. Ben-Gurion's own words troubled many:

> Our redemption will not come about, however, merely as a result of the redemption of the world. We shall not succeed without effort. Redemption must come from within ourselves. The messianic vision that has lighted up our path for thousands of years has prepared and fitted us to be a light to the nations. Moreover, it has imposed on us the duty of becoming a model people and building a modern state. It is through the power of this ideal with which we are imbued that we have succeeded in achieving the renewal of our independence—the "beginnings of redemption"; without the hope for Messianic redemption and the profound attachment to the ancient homeland, the State of Israel would never have been established.[143]

However, Nir Kedar argues that Ben-Gurion's intention was not so much the hastening of the messianic age but rather to make use of this ancient

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[142] Ohana, *Political Theologies*, p.9. See further on Herzl's visit to Jerusalem in Schlomo Avineri, *Herzl: Theodor Herzl and the Foundation of the Jewish State*, London: Orion Books Limited, 2008, pp.14ff

[143] David Ben-Gurion, "Messianic Vision Pioneering Drive", *Jewish Affairs*, April 1982. 2, quoted in Ohana, *Political Theologies*, p. 15.

prophetic language as the impetus to Israelis to express and frame human sovereignty and create a human society.[144] In this respect Ben-Gurion is very much in the tradition of Promethean Messianism, where the future of humankind is entirely the work of human hand. Ohana argues that Ben-Gurion did not develop his messianic approach after the creation of the State of Israel as a mechanism towards the settlement of newly arrived Jewish communities from far afield but was a "secular political theology" that roots itself firmly within the Zionist tradition. He insisted that victimhood in the face of antisemitism was not the cause that led to the creation of the State of Israel, but that the vision of messianic redemption that was deeply implanted in the Jewish soul. Nonetheless, the sense of exile in the Jewish mentality was something that had to be overcome, in other words exile was not merely a sense of geographical dislocation from one's ancient homeland, but was a state of mind:

> we have taken Jews out of exile, but we have not yet taken the exile out of the Jews.[145]

Ben-Gurion's secular Jewish Messianism positions him, not only as one of Israel's founding fathers but as a secular Zionist theologian, whose ideas were critical in forming Israeli identity. For Ben-Gurion there was a critical sense in which he disagreed with Herzl and others: Zionism was not forged merely by antisemitism but by an ancient messianic impulse, a spiritual DNA,

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[144] Nir Kedar, "'We need the messiah so that he may not come': on David Ben-Gurion's use of messianic language", *Israel Affairs*, Volume 19, 2013, Issue 3, pp. 393–409; see also Ohana, *Political Theologies*, pp. 17–53.

[145] Quoted in Ohana, *Political Theologies*, p. 20. Ben-Gurion's comment is similar to other liberationists movements. For example, Caribbean theologians often speak to the "slavery of the mind" to describe the longer process of liberation from older, subservience to old hegemonies.

towards the sense of Jewish autonomy, pride and self-sufficiency. This of course has deep roots in revolutionary ideas of the Enlightenment and beyond, particularly the French Revolution, but also the Russian Revolution, the ideas behind which were something that had great appeal to Ben-Gurion.[146]

Yet at the same time Ben-Gurion feared that the Israel that he strove so hard to create, a dynamic outward facing society, would shrink into an embattled fortress-mentality.[147] Perhaps he had in mind the growing allure of Masadan symbolism and we have already explored the evolving of these ideas and some of the difficulties it came to present. Ben-Gurion had sought to identify a Mediterranean character of the Israeli State by stressing that the Hebrews had been pioneers in developing a Mediterranean consciousness (predating the Greeks and Romans). Jewish participation in Mediterranean culture was an important part of establishing Israeli identity as something with cultural depth and historical longevity and thus not something that could easily be characterized as a mere colonial creation. The creation of the "Canaanite group" in 1939 made the distinction between those Jews who resided in Palestine and those in the diaspora. For the Canaanites, Palestinian Jews' history and identity were bound up with the sea and the culture of the Mediterranean. This was important because it maintained an openness to the non-Jewish world.

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[146] Ben-Gurion took issue with Talmon and his fears that political Messianism would lead to despotism as it had with the French revolution, instead praising the French revolution as a "blessing for humanity"; see Ohana, *Nationalizing Judaism: Zionism as a Theological Ideology*, pp. 47ff.

[147] Ohana, *Political Theologies*, pp. 14f.

Zionism thus finds itself held captive by the very narrative from which it had sought to free itself. Zionism understands itself essentially as a liberationist movement—to set Jews free from the antisemitism of Christian civilization that had defined Jews as the rejectors and killers of Christ. The liberationist aspect of Zionism has its own particular character, as Ohana observes (and previously noted) that it was born in European soil and breathed its air, but found it fulfilled in the contours of the land and amidst the people of the Levant.[148]

Zionism's liberationist instincts would bring Jews into direct encounter, and conflict, with the liberationist desires and impulses of Palestinian Arabs, where it finds itself having to defend itself against a new definition that is imposed from outside—from the Muslim and increasingly the Christian worlds - that Zionism is a colonial movement.[149] To accept the colonial definition is to relinquish the definition that Zionism took to itself—that of a liberationist movement. To observe this in a more nuanced way it might be suggested that Zionism is a nationalist movement reacting against political power yet takes on the vestiges of colonialism. Once again, Zionism finds itself held captive by

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[148] Furthermore, Jewish liberationism is also distinctive due to Jewish Messianism. See further the work Michaël Löwy, "Modernité et Critique de la Modernité dans la Théologie de la Libération/Modernity and the Critique of Modernity in the Liberation Theology," *Archives De Sciences Sociales Des Religions* 71. 1 (1990): 7–23; M. Löwy, "Utopia and Revolution: Romantic socialism in . . . Martin Buber" in *Jewish Thought, Utopia, and Revolution*, Leiden: Brill. 2014; M. Löwy, "Jewish Nationalism and Libertarian Socialism in the Writings of Bernard Lazare", in *Nationalism, Zionism and Ethnic Mobilization of the Jews in 1900 and Beyond*, Leiden: Brill, 2004; "Martin Buber's Socialism", in *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 25 (2017), 95–104.

[149] Laura Robson, ''Palestinian Liberation Theology, Muslim-Christian Relations and the Arab-Israeli Conflict'', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 21 (2010), 39–50; Tariq Dana and Ali Jarbawi, "A Century of Settler Colonialism in Palestine: Zionism's Entangled Project", *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Fall/Winter 2017, Volume XXIV, Issue 1, pp. 1–23; see also Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997; Marc H. Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic: Israel's Ancient Wisdom Re-presented*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.

its struggle with the external. For this reason, numerous Israeli writers have sought to develop different kinds of Zionist narrative; one such attempt has been the “Mediterranean Option”.

2.7 Zionism and Levantinism

The place of Masada within Zionist thought is indicative of much of the personality of Zionism during the critical period of the development of Israel’s national consciousness. And whilst Masada is not a part of the traditional sacred hermeneutic of the Jewish people, not being told in the Tanakh, it nonetheless impels remembrance of Israel’s sacred past and its calamitous end and as such is part of the theological turn in Zionist thinking and passion. It possesses the recurring leitmotif of eschatological tragedy at the heart of Judaism’s relationship to history. And the obvious point is that it specifically is indicative of the place and significance of “land” in Zionist thinking. Masada is symbolic of the Israeli bastion that will not fall again and, as Idith Zertal suggests, all historical Jewish travail is placed in the present tense which Zionism will once and for all resolve: a *political anamnesis* of King David’s victories that incorporate the fighters of Masada, Bar Kochbar and the 1948 and 1967 conflicts.[150] This was an ideological reversal of previous Jewish political wisdom that viewed their own travail as evidence of falling short of the God of the covenant.[151] Although it is a contested characterization that Zionism was merely as a response to the Shoah, it was that cataclysmic event, and how Jews could and must avoid its recurrence, that would become the leitmotif that would render Masada such a powerful and even romantic

[150] Idith Zertal, *Israel’s Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, Cambridge, 2005, p. 182f.
[151] See Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, pp. 40–78.

symbol of an emerging Israeli national consciousness, that was laden with theological and mythic overtones.

However, as we have seen, there are numerous problems with this paradigm, in particular there is the consequence of Israel viewing itself as a place under continual siege, an insoluble relationship with the world defined by hostility to Jews wherever they may live, and therefore a national existence with no creative relationship with its neighbours. Furthermore, there is unintended consequence of it reinforcing the accusation of Zionism as a Western colonial movement where oppression of the indigenous inhabitants was inevitable.

The intellectual starting point is to be found in Europe, and specifically Germanic culture, rather the North Africa or the Middle East. David Ohana speaks of Zionist cultural ambition being that of the creation of a (Nietzchean) "new man" which finds its fruition not in any sense of a place being found within European society, but as a people, liberated and self-determined, with a land to call their own. With Gershom Scholem speaking of Jews stepping out of history in order to re-enter Jewish history and Martin Buber talking of the mystical connection between the land and its people,[152] the land became inextricably linked to the emergence of the "new man" in Zionist thought.

This is a subtle adaptation of Nietzsche's thought: the replacing of Christian European culture with the "will to power" is translated to the context of the State of Israel and the self-determination of the Jewish people. Ohana's point regarding "cultural ambition" is important given Nietzsche's suspicion of

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[152] Martin Buber is sometimes characterized as a "Left wing religious Zionist" and frequently advocated for a bi-national state with the indigenous Arabs. See: Stefan Vogt. (2016). The Postcolonial Buber: Orientalism, Subalternity, and Identity Politics in Martin Buber's Political Thought. *Jewish Social Studies*, 22(1), 161–186. https://doi.org/10.2979/jewisocistud.22.1.05 (accessed (09/04/2023)

nationalisms and nation states. Nietzsche's view was that nation states stifle cultural development, even though they allow its seeds to be planted.[153] Zionism, as a nationalism, and the modern State of Israel, with its determination to survive, as we have seen, has significant shortcomings when expressed through Masadan mythology.

The allure of Nietzsche's language of the "new man" and the "will to power" is underlined by Ohana by pointing to the Arab paradox for early Zionists in the land. The Arabs were perceived as self-assured, confident, with a sense of permanency in the land. This was in contrast to the exilic Jew, who according to the stereotype, was "weak, over-spiritual and physically uprooted". The East therefore became not only a place of refuge but also the place of renewal, where the Jew would again discover his/her strength and their identity born anew and why the Middle East is so important in the development of Jewish identity in a post-Holocaust world. Yet this only serves to underline the ambiguity of Zionism's relationship to the East. Whilst David Ben-Gurion spoke of the Jews becoming once again an Oriental people, Israel chose to define itself not in neo-Eastern terms but as an extension of European culture.[154] This, more than anything else, has nurtured the belief and the suspicion that Zionism was essential a colonial movement, and Israel as an outpost of Western hegemony.[155]

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[153] See further Carol Diethef, "Nietzsche and Nationalism", *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 14. No. 2, pp. 227–234, 1992.

[154] "Jews in Asia: From the Baghdadis to Ben Gurion & Beyond": American Sephardi Federation: *Sephardi Ideas Monthly*: 31 January 2023. https://americansephardi.org/news/simjan23/ (accessed 20/04/23) To a conservable extent, Ben Gurion was seeking to define "Israel" as distinct from the (Christian) Europe from which it had broken free. See further: Anita Shapira, *Ben Gurion: Father of Modern Israel*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press1971.

[155] David Ohana, "Israel and the Mediterranean Option", http://www. passia. org/seminars/2000/israel/part11. html [accessed 7/2/2017).

Without stretching a point, it could be argued that Masada, whilst having ancient roots in Palestine, is essentially a product of Ashkenazi Jewish thinking, forged in the ghettos and in the failure of Jews to find the formula by which they could flourish securely in European lands. Meanwhile some Israeli scholars of the Mizrahi tradition have looked to their own rootedness in the land and have developed what has come to be known as "Levantinism" or the "Mediterranean Option" (Hebrew: *yam tikhoniyut*). This arises from those communities that are either indigenous to Palestine or more significantly those that were expelled from elsewhere following the establishment of the State of Israel, including from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.[156] Put simply, this claims that Jews have always been a part of the diversity of the Mediterranean region—culturally, politically and religiously. From ancient times the Mediterranean has been a vibrant culture, it is claimed, held together by a dynamic interchange expressed, particularly through trade, but also through cultural and linguistic exchange. Thus, Levantinism offers not only a rootedness in the land and cultural connectivity, but, and perhaps most critically, a context of cultural, political and inter-religious dialogue. But this requires some degree of a rethinking of how Israeli's understand themselves, not merely a brutalized people that have found their liberation in a new, yet ancient land.

Previous expressions of Zionism, of which Masada was symptomatic, had inadvertently encouraged the sense that Jews in Palestine were outsiders

[156] See further, Malka Hillel Shulewitz (ed.), *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands,* London: Continuum, 1999; Zion Zohar, *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times*, New York: New York University Press, 2005; Ian Black, *Enemies and Neighbours: Arabs and Jews in Palestine and Israel, 1917–2017*, London: Allen Lane 2017; Gudrun Krämer, "Anti-Semitism in the Muslim World. A Critical Review", *Die Welt Des Islams*, vol. 46, no. 3, Brill, 2006, pp. 243–76.

with no claim to the land. This led many opponents of Israel to characterize Zionism as a colonial movement. Early forms of Zionism therefore unintentionally helped to frame the arguments of those who sought to delegitimize its claim to the land. Zionist emphasis upon the story of European Jewry has resulted in the sense of Israel as a Western nation, modelled on European society, that was separate from its Middle Eastern and North African neighbours. Levantinism became popular amongst Israeli academics in the period after the Oslo Accords, with Gil Z. Hochberg suggesting that it was not so much an extension of the Oslo Accords but an alternative to them.[157]

Ohana's description of the "Crusader" narrative aligns Zionism with Western colonialism, and much of the allure of Masada is part of this narrative: Israel literally stands apart defending itself against hostile neighbours. However, the "Mediterranean" denotes the meeting place of cultures, the dialogue between East and West. This therefore strikes a very different tone as to how Judaism, through Zionism, expresses itself in the land. Ohana traces the Mediterranean option to the writings of Jacqueline Kahanoff (1917–79). Kahanoff was an Egyptian-born Israeli feminist journalist, essayist and novelist, whose collection of essays *A Generation of Levantines*, published in the 1950s, offers a model of cultural co-existence drawn from the experience of her childhood.[158] This Levantinism differed from previous Zionist discourses by stressing Israel as a melting pot for different Jewish identities into a new

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[157] Gil Z. Hochberg, "'The Mediterranean Option': On the Politics of Regional Affiliation in Current Israeli Cultural Imagination", *Journal of Levantine Studies*, Summer 2011, No. 1, pp. 41–65; see also Matthias B. Lehmann and Jessica M. Marglin (eds), *Jews and the Mediterranean*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020.
[158] For the broader context of Judaism in Egypt, see Gudrun Kramer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914–1952*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1989.

Zionist identity in the land. By contrast what was offered was an option that held to a diverse understanding of what Israeli identity is, with multiple voices, language and cultural voices. The Mediterranean option entered into public academic discourse in the 1990s and represents a very broad, and often at times, diffuse body of writings, encompassing philosophy, theology, politics, literature and popular culture.

The previous dominant narrative against which Kahanoff was reacting was forged out of a European consciousness, that was “secular, socialist and masculine”.[159] Martin Buber’s description of the human predicament in the modern world, as the individual so bereft of “home” that he exists “in the world as in an open field under the vault of heaven, and sometimes unable to find even four pegs to set up his tent” would urge the individual forward to find the security and identity they so craved: and this is the intellectual and spiritual dimension of Zionism that was forged in Europe[160]. Within this cultural and intellectual context, Kahanoff sought a solution to this predicament in the form of Levantinism, at a time when Israeli national consciousness was still being formed (the 1950s).

Kahanoff, like Ohana, was not of Ashkenazi background, growing up in Egypt of Tunisian and Iraqi Jewish parentage and this proved significant in terms of her understanding of Mediterranean culture as “cross-influence” and “cross-mutation” of East and West, with Israel becoming significant because it is the

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[159] "Masculinity" is a recurring theme in discussions of early Israeli Zionism. See further Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 271–312.
[160] David Ohana, “The Mediterranean Option in Israel: An Introduction to the Thought of Jacqueline Kahanoff”, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, (2006) 21:2, 239–263, DOI: 10.1080/09518960601030159; *Israel and its Mediterranean Identity*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 77–97.

geographical context of such interchange. Describing her childhood where inter-cultural exchange between different faiths and cultures (citing Muslims, Syrians, Greeks, Italians, Christians, Tunisians, Arabs and Armenians), she speaks of a "Mosaic of the Levant", but also of "suborn local subcultures and the multi-layered identities of the Levant's people".[161]

Kahanoff's dynamic vision of the Levant arose from her own lived experience in the plural context of Egypt where she was raised and is illustrated in her own words as she compares it to a prism:

> Because of its diversity, the Levant has been compared to a mosaic—bits of stone of different colours assembled into a flat picture. To me it is more like a prism who various facets are joined by the sharp edges of differences, but each of which, according to its position in a time-space reflect or refracts light. Indeed, the concept of a continuum is contained in the word Levant as in the word mizrah, and perhaps the time has come for the Levant to reevaluate itself by its own lights, rather than see itself through European sights, as something quaintly exotic, tired, sick and almost lifeless.[162]

And given what we have already observed about Zionism and its roots in Romanticism it is important to note that for Kahanoff, modernity was not merely framed out of a Western discourse but the modern determination of different peoples to find their way in the world. Ohana suggests that she anticipates "multiple modernities" as mooted by S. N. Eisenstadt.[163] And the

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[161] D. Ohana, *Israel and its Mediterranean Identity*, p. 78f.
[162] Kahanoff, "From East the Sun", 1968, quoted in in David Ohana, *Israel and its Mediterranean Identity*, p. 79.
[163] Ohana, op. cit., p. 79f. See further S. N. Eisenstadt: "Multiple Modernities", *Daedalus*, Vol. 129, No. 1, Winter 2000, pp. 1–29, MIT Press.

culture of the Levant become a melded identity (Ohana calls it a hybrid identity) that is an alternative to the socio-political culture of Israel which is often polarized and factional. The Levant then becomes a forum of cultural exchange between East and West that includes religion and that historically it has frequently fulfilled that role, something that Levantinism would seek to recover. An important aspect of this recovery would be the recognition and confrontation of the inherent colonialism of the Jewish-Ashkenazy invention of the modern State of Israel that has engaged in a process of othering Mizrahi Jews (who are to be viewed as "local" in contrast to Ashkenazy Jews), something that she calls a "sickness" within Israeli society, but which Levantinism could overcome.

What Levantinism aspired to was less of an enclosed nation state defined by Ashkenazy Jewish memory and experience of a perpetually homeless people that had returned to history intent of determining their own destiny, and much more of Jews in the Levant defined by their Eastern context, engaging in dialogical encounter both with their neighbours and more widely in dialogical and cultural encounter with the West. An important criticism, particular of Kahanoff, is that she is too focused on Israel and the nation it might become and pays too little attention to the Arab experience since 1947, although her protestations that Ashkenazy colonialism towards Jews of the East is one that at least has the theoretical potential to find common ground with Palestinian Arabs, both Christian and Muslim. It is from this objection, however, that some commentators have critiqued Levantinism that it has enabled (Jewish) Israelis an alternative to engaging with its Arab neighbours, and especially the Palestinians, turning itself to Southern Europe and North Africa to seek

common cultural and political heritage. Yet the defenders of the Mediterranean option have insisted that it offers Israel a genuine possibility of a cultural dialogue, *especially* with its Arab neighbours that leaves behind political polarities of Israeli and Arab. The premise of this option is that there are geo-cultural affinities for the different peoples that surround the Mediterranean that have political significance, encourage cultural dialogue and to some extent broker reconciliation in Israel's conflict with its neighbours. By contrast the "Mediterranean" was a construct of the colonial powers (Britain and France) that has internal conflict wired into it.

Judaism too had an important role to play. Emmanuel Lévinas had posited a Judaism, imbued with cultural and political autonomy, would become a post-Christian Judaism.[164] For Kahanoff, taking Lévinas into her own thought world, saw Judaism's narrative— "the drama of our existence"—as no longer unfolding in the context of the Christian West but in the context of the eastern—the Islamic world. The latter she called post-Islamic Judaism thus she offers a description of Judaism's new path of finding its way in the world that is both post-Christian and post-Islamic.[165]

Here Kahanoff draws on the Jacob-Essau narrative and Ohana eloquently encapsulates the problem:

> The rebirth of Abraham's estranged son and his return as a refugee from the concentration camps was seen as a challenge to the Islamic belief that Ishmael was the sole heir. Although the Muslim national

[164] Emmanuel Lévinas (1906–1995) was an important French Jewish philosopher of Lithuanian heritage who worked particularly in the fields of phenomenology and existentialism and is work is often associated with Martin Buber.
[165] D. Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*, pp. 202ff.

> opposition is modern, its roots are ancient and steeped in mythology and in the theology of rivalry. Both national movements, the Jewish and the Arab, came into being at roughly the same time. One was supported by Europe, and the other rose up against European colonialist rule. The ancient myth of Ishmael and Isaac emerged once again in the age of nationalism.

Kahanoff's solution to the conflict that Israel has with its neighbours is in the guise of Levantinism, however, even if such a solution seems to offer little political momentum, her approach to Judaism's place in the world is of profound significance for the future of Judaism's encounter with its two principle religious others. Not only has Judaism moved beyond the otherings of Christian theology and Islamic polity, but it has in the form of Israel profoundly changed the interreligious power dynamic. This is the easterly tilt that this thesis is describing: Judaism that has broken free of its ancient characterizations of its two monotheistic cousins with their universalised theologies of salvation and asserts its own *scandalous particularity* that is rooted not in the Western Christian context of perpetual wandering or the Islamic dhimmitude of the East but in a nation state where Jews live and flourish.

The sense of their being both a post-Christian and post-Islamic Judaism also implies that there is a post-Ashkenazi and post-Sephardic Judaism also. The Ashkenazi had existed as a minority amidst Christian ecclesial hegemony, the Sephardim, for the most part, were a minority within the Dar al-Islam,[166] The

[166] Whilst Sephardic communities were for the most part of a feature of non-European Jewry, there were significant communities in Europe, especially the Iberian Peninsula (the origin of

creation of the State of Israel would have a profound effect upon both the Ashkenazi and Sephardic traditions. For the Ashkenazi, almost completely crushed by the Nazis, Israel became the place of safety and security, the place to which one could flee. For those Jews who chose not undertake *aliya*, Israel nonetheless would frame what it meant to be Jewish in the world. For the Sephardim the change was all the more profound. Most the of Jewish communities living in Muslim lands, including Sephardic communities, which had existed in not insignificant numbers in places such as Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen were either forced to flee to Israel or chose to make *aliya* due their feelings of increased vulnerability.[167] These along with Palestinian Jews, found themselves belonging to a new Israeli State that was dominated by Ashkenazi leadership and their European Jewish narrative which very quickly came to define the character of the Israeli State.

A question that arises from the this is whether Levantinism is an alternative to the competing nationalisms of Zionism and Arab nationalism or whether it is more properly to be regarded as a more open and plural manifestation of a diverse Zionist tradition? Kahanoff herself wrote that being a Levantine means belonging to two worlds whilst not being fully at home in either. As Starr and

their nomenclature), Italy and the Balkans, Bulgarian Sephardic communities being one of the first to formally embrace Zionism. See Daniel J. Elazar: "Can Sephardic Judaism be Reconstructed?", Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (date note specified), http://www. jcpa. org/dje/articles3/sephardic. htm [accessed 13/02/2017].

[167] Daniel J. Elazar has pointed to the disintegration of traditional Sephardic centres, resulting from the Holocaust and the post-1948 Islamic pressures, to such an extent that by the 1960's these only existed in the memory of an older generation. Thus the Sephadim become part of the cultural heritage of the modern and post-modern worlds, but with a loss of Sephardic distinctiveness. Judesmo, or Judezmo (also known as Ladino) might be described as the Sephardic parallel to Yiddish, sometimes known as Judeo-Spanish, it is a language made up of Romance languages, Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic and was mostly spoken in Jewish communities within the Ottoman Empire, including Palestinian Jews of Sephardic heritage. See David M. Bunis, "Judezmo: The Jewish Language of the Ottoman Sephardim", *European Judaism*, Vol. 44, No. 1, Spring 2011, Issue No. 1, pp. 22–35.

Somekh note, her version of Levantinism serves as both social theory and history. In reality the Levantinism of Kahanoff is probably more accurately read and understood through the desire to maintain the integrity within Israel of the cultures that come with Mizrahi Jews rather than them being merely absorbed into the more dominant narrative of European Jewry.[168]

The resident Jews prior to 1948, whilst including relatively new arrivals from Ashkenazi communities of Eastern Europe, included substantial communities of Sephardic Jews. However, Sephardic perspectives on the land become subsumed into the dominant Ashkenazi political narrative of Israeli Zionism. The Masada narrative asserts itself out of an Ashkenazi European experience, which sought freedom from (Christian) European dominance and subjugation but represented a continuation of its European story, always fearful of one's neighbour, and a determination never again to succumb, even if that meant death.

And perhaps for similar reasons the Mediterranean option, as Ohana points out, has largely disappeared from the mainstream of Israeli political discourse. The language of cultural symbiosis and religious co-existence would seem naïve at best in the contemporary geo-political climate, and Ohana notes the trajectory away from that vision, noting the lament of Albert Camus that genuine co-existence and mutuality had not come to fruition in Algeria.[169] Yet

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[168] Deborah A. Starr and Sasson Somekh (eds), *Mongrels or Marvels: The Levantine Writings of Jacqueline Kahanoff*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011, p. xxiiff.

[169] Ohana, *Nationalizing Judaism*, pp. 144–151. Albert Camus (1913–60), was a renowned existentialist philosopher and novelist who was born to Pieds-Noirs (Europeans, including, French nationals, who had made their home in Algeria) parents and who strongly believed in the co-existence between the indigenous Arab population of Algeria and the Pieds-Noirs. His writings, however, have been criticized, most notably by Edward Said, for their colonial overtones.

the very nature of the cultural and religious pluralism of the Middle East would suggest at least that Levantinism is still a voice that resists total silence.

2.8 Levantinism as Theological Space? Noting the Questions

Having explored some the ideas of Levantinism through the writing of Kahanoff and Ohana, what might the implications be for the Jewish-Christian encounter? Indeed, is there implicit in their work theological questions that need further exploration? In many respects, the contribution and thought of figures as diverse of as Buber, Scholem, Ben-Gurion and Tabenkin are moving towards a “theological turn” for Zionism with profound implications for itself and for its primary religious others. It is certainly the case that there are theological points that Kahanoff hints at and in the work of David Ohana it increasingly feels that he is moving into an intellectual space where theological questions demand to be addressed. One instance of this is when Ohana poses the question as to whether for Zionism, Judaism’s understanding of Messiahship is that of “Son of David” or “Son of Joseph”: a clear juxtaposition of ideas of Jewish identity that is forged out of its own vitality and survival or still living in the shadow of Christian ecclesial hegemony.[170] In particular, how can the theological implications of the land be avoided when it is not merely contested politically but is also holy space in different ways for Christians, Jews and Muslims and where there is so much theological language that is shared between Jews and Christians? The Zionism that has its roots in 19th century late-Romanticism sidestepped any

[170] David Ohana, *Nationalizing Judaism: Zionism as a Theological Ideology*, London: Lexington Books, 2017, p. 2f.

theological discourse. But significant Jewish migration to the Holy Land and the declaration of statehood in 1948 brought with it a theological dimension (one of the ships that arrived in 1948 bringing refugees from Europe was named “Exodus”), and as we have seen David Ben-Gurion was a political leader with a strong theological fascination. Thus, what we have called a “theological turn” in Zionist thought is also an inevitable trajectory that accelerated with the aftermath of the Six Day War of 1967 where theological language became more widespread in Israeli political and popular discourse. And from an inter-religious perspective this has a particularity bringing under Israel’s political control the Holy Sites of the Old City of Jerusalem. And how is this “holy space” to be described when two of the three share holy space, and another looks on from its holy places? As religion has asserted itself more overtly, both in Israel and Palestine, what is the dialogical nature of the encounter when there is a unique encounter, not only between what has loosely been called “the Abrahamic faiths” but also the intra-religious encounters between Western and Eastern Christianity, Ashkenazy and Mizrahi Judaism, and how they in turn understand their encounter with Islam? This is particular the case when we consider Kahanoff’s suggestion of Zionism being a post-Christian and post-Islamic Judaism: If Scholem’s description of his stepping out of world history into Jewish history describes in essence the nature of Zionist intent what is the nature of Judaism’s encounter with its two significant “religious others”? How does Judaism understand religious otherness in this Levantine theological context, and how is a Christian theology of religious otherness affected by this reality? Jonathan Sacks suggests that Judaism was never meant only for Jews, as that would

render its claims absurd (that God would only be interested in a single people), a point that may be key to further developing these reflections within Jewish thought.[171] Furthermore, there is implicit in the work of Kahanoff that Levantinism opens up the important matter of religion as a key motivator in culture.

Although as a forum of political ideas, Levantinism has never gained significant currency, might it offer potential as theological space? We have already noted a "theological turn" in Zionist thought and Ohana himself has begun to approach this in his more recent work.[172] His 2017 book *Nationalizing Judaism: Zionism as a Theological Ideology* explicitly examines how Zionism has drawn to itself the historical Jewish past, utilizing its theological components to forge Zionism as a "theological ideology". What he reveals is, what he calls, a "quasi-eschatological fervour" and quotes the observation of Anita Shapira that

> scratch the empiricistic surface of a Zionist leader a little and you will discover a quivering messianic faith which breaks forth in moments of crisis of what Talmon called 'historical breaththrough'.[173]

This is part of the developing thought of Ohana around the principal themes of the Canaanite and Crusader narratives that threaten to undermine Zionism.

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[171] Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009.
[172] In his 2020 study of "Restorative Utopias" with Liran Shia Gordon he begins an exploration of the Christian theological context with a characterization of Catholic Replacement Theology traced to St. Augustine that is set against the work of John Calvin and his successors in the English-speaking world that saw a place for Jews in the divine economy that is closely linked to Jewish restoration. See Gordon and Ohana, *Restorative Utopias.*
[173] David Ohana, *Nationalizing Judaism: Zionism and Theological*, p. 47.

However, Don Seeman suggests that the theological dimension to Ohana's work remains underdeveloped and partly unfulfilled.[174]

2.9 Concluding Observations

Zionism is a vast and complex canvass to observe and is a dramatic change in the cultural and theological direction of Judaism. It succeeded in radically shifting Judaism towards a deliberate and effortless confidence as a people in control of their destiny and located in the land of their ancient longing. This required of it not only a geographical relocation in terms of its destiny but also would lead to a theological turn as the language of theology came to be of growing significance. And in the specific themes that we have explored in this chapter we might note a number of features that pertain to the easterly tilt in the Jewish-Christian encounter:

(1) The shift in imagination from the Jewish people as a European minority, with Christianity as the primary religious other, to a Jewish State and significant regional power with its own Palestinian population, and a military power in Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza with its larger Palestinian people, with Islam as the significant religious other.

(2) That Judaism, through Zionism, finds itself located in a land where Palestinians are embedded in the parallel contexts of the Islamic and Eastern Christian worlds.

[174] Don Seeman, "Review: David Ohana, Nationalizing Judaism: Zionism as a Theological Ideology", *Israel Studies Review: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2019, 34, pp. 163–165.

(3) That Zionism, as the overarching national leitmotif, is a European originating nationalism with many different manifestations, yet Israel has also become the home to large number of Mizrahi Jews who now make up around 60 percent of Jews in Israel, and they have a different history and identity to that of European (Ashkenazy) Jews.

(4) That this relocation of the heartbeat of the Jewish people poses important questions as to the primary religious other in this Eastern context and its implications for Christian theology and its engagement with Judaism.

A more fundamental question that arises from this is whether the pre-eminence of the Land in Jewish self-understanding in a post-Shoah world, fundamentally recalibrates Christianity's theological account of Judaism and whether this also challenges many of the assumptions about Christianity's theological self-understanding in a post-Holocaust world? We have noted in this chapter that the land becoming critical to how Jews find their place in the world after Auschwitz has not only transformed Judaism as a religion (and that has implications for Christian theology), and transformed Jews from being a wandering people to a nation in the modern sense of the word, but has raised fundamental questions of justice and political power that have and continue to impact upon the lives of Palestinians. This is essentially the easterly tilt in the Jewish-Christian encounter that this thesis sets out to describe. And an important part of that new epistemological context is the character and context of Palestinian Christianity and how its theologians have sought to understand its relationship to Judaism.

We might also observe that Judaism's account of itself can be characterized as the theology of a people in its relationship to the world. In terms of the

Jewish-Christian encounter this is primarily about the cultural interaction with the non-Jewish world, whereas Christianity is essentially the ecclesial relationship to the world. How then does the Jewish-Christian encounter re-imagine itself in this Eastern context? If Judaism in Israel today is to look beyond itself, as Kahanoff surely implores, that its relationship to Christianity must be of paramount importance, not merely through dialogue with Judaism historic dialogue partner—the Catholic West—but the Christianity of the Holy Land. But whilst Judaism's re-territorialization in the land of its ancient yearning demonstrates the need for the Jewish-Christian encounter to tilt eastwards, the implication for Christianity as a world faith, with its ancient roots in this same land, is profound most especially for the churches of the Palestine and Israel, and to this reality we now turn.

CHAPTER 3

The Ecclesial Turn in the Jewish-Christian Encounter: Palestinian Christianity, its Historical, Ecclesial and Inter-Religious Context

3.1 Land, Holiness and the Question of Terminology

Gudrun Krämer observes there are "no innocent terms especially in geography".[175] And this is no truer than when it comes to the land of Palestine/Israel or the Holy Land as it is often called. Indeed "the Holy Land" can refer to more than what is today commonly understood as Israel and Palestine. In fact, most of the names for this land bring with them contestation to greater or lesser degree, as indeed the description "Middle East". So before looking at the nature and context of Palestinian Christianity it is helpful to outline some of the challenges regarding nomenclature.

First of all— "Middle East". Without question designations such as "the Near East" or "the Middle East" are largely Western definitions that make no sense from any other standpoint, not least in the region itself. It is thought that the term Middle East originated in the British India Office around 1850 but it was also used by naval strategists in the early years of the 20th century to refer to the area between Arabia and India. This is against the context of the competing interests of the Russian and British Empires for influence across the Middle East and Asia that would come to be known as the "Great Game"; and it is fair to say that the term Middle East has its origins within the colonial

[175] Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine*, p. 14. Krämer is a noted scholar of Islam and the Muslim World. Her doctoral research was on the theme of the modern history of Jews in Egypt and has contributed to the study of Islamist politics and religious thought in contemporary Egypt and the wider region.

interests of powers external to the region. Thus, British interest in Palestine and the wider Middle East has a strategic intent with an eye to the balance of power in Europe[176]

Palestinian-American academic Edward Said (1935–2003) in his seminal work *Orientalism* insists that concepts such as "the Middle East" are products of Western romantic ideas of the orient, whereby non-Western peoples are characterized as exotic, often sexualized, and unsophisticated, and most assuredly inferior to Western culture. Said suggests that the dominant medieval religious narrative of identity in Europe came to be replaced with categories of race, nation and culture and Orientalism was central to this with its distinction between the culture of the West ("us") and the East ("them"), and thus it was an "othering" of all things Eastern, what Disraeli referred to as "the great Asiatic mystery".[177] Orientalism is thus more than merely a pejorative "othering" of adjacent cultures but rather a discourse of power, knowledge and redemption. And therefore any theological appraisal of the place of land, and especially the location of Jewish-Christian relations in an easterly context cannot be interrogated without some reference to the Orientalizing tendency. [178] Said further notes that one of the consequences (unintended) of the European imagination and its view of the Orient has preserved the idea of a Palestine containing within it indigenous Arab

[176] Krämer, *A History of Palestine*, pp. 139ff.
[177] See further, Richard A. Levine: "Disraeli's *Tancred* and the Great Asian Mystery", *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, Vol. 22. No. 1 (June 1967), pp. 71–85, Berkeley: University of California Press; Patrick Brantlinger: "Disraeli and Orientalism", in Charles Richmond and Paul Smith (eds), *The Self Fashioning of Disraeli, 1818–1851*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 90–105.
[178] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin Books, 1978, 2003, pp. 31–49; see also W. D. Hurt, *Edward Said and the Religious Effects of Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 2008, pp. 62ff.

peoples.[179] Yet we might note in passing that Said's approach is from the standpoint of a cultural post-Enlightenment intellectualism and doesn't position himself within the religious context of Palestine (himself of Protestant Christian heritage) and as such never addresses the place of Eastern Christianity within his writings.

Given the difficulties associated with the designation "Middle East" and its predecessor "Near East", the alternative "West Asia" has come into scholarly usage, and it remains to be seen whether this will become the default designation.[180] West Asia is not entirely coterminous with the Middle East for it does not include Iran, but does include Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as Turkey and Cyprus. West Asia is also used in conjunction with the region of North Africa stretching from Egypt and Sudan in the East to Western Sahara and Morocco in the West. Thus, West Asia and North Africa curve around the Mediterranean Sea and contains within it a huge diversity of culture and religion. Thus, we might note that West Asia becomes a new location for the Jewish-Christian encounter.

"Palestine" is not a neat entity. With no natural land borders, it has often been seen as part of Greater Syria, sometimes being denoted as Syria's southern province, and was only an independent political entity for short periods of history. In fact, the contemporary usage of the term owes much to the period

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[179] Said, *The Question of Palestine*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979, 1992, p. 9. He cites to the work François-René, vicomte de Chateaubriand, Mark Twain, Alphonse Marie Louis de Prat de Lamartine, Gérard de Nerval and Benjamin Disraeli. See also Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain and the Holy Land Mania*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
[180] See Kenneth R. Ross, Maritz Tadros and Todd M. Hohnson (eds), *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, Edinburgh, 2018.

of the British Mandate[181] following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918.[182] As Kramer observes:

> To be able to establish the names of things serves as one of the most telling indicators of political and cultural power. For this reason the various terms used to designate the land of Palestine are instructive, reflecting as they did the dominant perspective and by the same token prevailing power relations.[183]

Conversely however, Palestinian historian Nur Masalha has sought to emphasize the continuing reality of Palestinian territorialism and resists those, Eastern as well as Western scholars, who have claimed that Palestinian national consciousness only emerges in parallel with the creation of the State of Israel and the emergence of similar movements of Arab nationalism. He resists on the one hand many Israeli scholars that insist that "Palestine" is part of the late 20th century political imagination, and on the other those Muslim Arab scholars that emphasize Arab identity rather than specific national identities. [184] His argument sets out the historical trajectory whereby "Palestine" has been in continuous usage as a geo-political designation.[185]

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[181] See further, A. O'Mahony, "Palestinian Christians: religion, politics and society c. 1800–1948", in A. O'Mahony (ed.), *Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society in the Holy Land*, London: Melisende, 1999, pp. 9–55.

[182] And not just Palestine: The Asia Minor Agreement (commonly referred to as Sykes-Picot) between Britain and France with the acquiescence of Tsarist Russia, divided the former Ottoman Empire outside the Arabian Peninsula, into entities of control or influence for the main powers. This in turn created the boarders of the countries that came to be known as Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria. Palestine was to be governed by an international administration.

[183] Krämer, *History of Palestine*, p. 1f.

[184] Masalha mentions the work of Israeli scholar Myriam Rosen-Ayalon in her work on Islamic art and archeology, who argues that "Palestine is a relatively modern concept" and Palestinian writer 'Asmi Beshara who has argued that Palestinian nationality is a Western construct. See Nur Masalha, *Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History*, London: Zed Books Ltd, 2018, pp. 15ff.

[185] Nur Masalha, pp. 1–54.

As we shall see, Western perceptions, power and influence run deep with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. Said contends that Palestine, far from an accepted geo-political reality, has hitherto been something that exists as merely an idea, a memory, an experience, sustained by the collective will of a people.[186] Furthermore, Palestinian Christian writings are caught between a desire for self-determination and a need to address issues that are shaped by Western approaches and priorities: thus the period of the British Mandate and the impact of Western Christian Zionism are critical issues that shape Palestinian search for a theology of the Land.

When it comes to “Israel”, whilst many still contest the existence of the Jewish State, the real challenge for the purposes of this research concerns the collision between ancient theological ideas of “Israel” as God’s people, described in scripture that is an important theological theme for Christianity as well as Judaism and the very conscious decision of figures such as David Ben-Gurion to choose this name for the modern Jewish state that came into being in 1948. And so, Christians across the region (not just in Palestine) must wrestle with their experience of “Israel” as a soldier or settler and their theological knowledge of Israel as the people of God.

The land that is referred to as Israel-Palestine is also part of what is called the “Holy Land”, which invariably includes parts of modern-day Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The very nomenclature “Holy Land” denotes a particularity and implies this land is different from any other, in some respects a place set apart and even outside of ordinary human existence, a place where God choses to

[186] E. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p. 8f.

dwell. Krämer notes the tendency within Christianity to "deterritorialization" of the Holy Land which might be a reversal of Jewish particularity of the land. She notes that whilst Judaism and Christianity share a good deal of theological language about "Land", the fundamental difference is that whilst in Judaism "Land" is linked to covenant and divine promise, in Christianity it is concerned with individuals, most particularly Christ but also the saints and martyrs whose holiness renders the land holy, and by implication, not the people. To press this point even further, we might say that Christian notions of Holy Land hold within it a replacement theology of land.

Furthermore, the description of this land as "holy" begs important theological questions: holy to whom? Can a land be holy when it is contested, when it lacks justice and contains violent conflict within it? Can a single land be holy when it is religiously plural? Does "holy" imply hegemony of one religious narrative, and if so, which narrative? To what extent can we assert that the "holiness" of Jerusalem cannot be solely possessed because its holiness is claimed by three faiths? And is there locked in this reality the potential for a reworked description of what it means to call a land or a place "holy"?[187]

3.2 The Identity and Context of Palestinian Christianity

Palestinian Christianity's theological anthropology is a hermeneutic of voice and of presence: a voice to the world church lest it forget the continuous

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[187] See further, *Colin Chapman, Whose Promised Land: The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine*, Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1983, 1992, 2002; Donald E. Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, London: Melisende 2003; Salim J. Munayer and Lisa Loden (eds), *The Land Cries Out: Theology of the Land in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012.

existence of Christianity in the land of Jesus Christ, and a presence that is a witness to the Gospel within two dominant theo-political hegemonies, that of Islam and Judaism, or more precisely the distinctive religious nationalisms that dominate the geo-political context of the Middle East.[188] Yet beneath this often simplistic portrayal of the Middle East, that of a binary juxtaposition of a Zionist State and Islamist polity, the reality is much more plural.[189] It is because of the binary presentation of Middle Eastern politics that Christianity of the region is often occluded. Where Christian presence is acknowledged it too can be characterized in terms that are simplistic, often read through Western Christian assumptions. Therefore we must affirm from the outset a number of fundamental realities that are critical to a theological enquiry about "land", theology and the Jewish-Christian encounter: the plural natures of the region, of Christianity (and indeed of Judaism and Islam), and the manner in which Christian life and witness in this context is deeply immersed in an inter-religious and geo-political context where the power is held by actors other than Eastern Christianity, and that historically this has almost always been the case.

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[188] See further: Ronald L. Nettler, "A Post-Colonial Encounter of Traditions: Muhammed Sa'd Al-Ashmawi on Islam and Judaism", in Ronald L. Nettler (ed.), *Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations*, Oxford 1995.

[189] For a range of discussions of the religious plurality of the region, see for example Anthony O'Mahony and John Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, London: Melisende 2010; A. O'Mahony (ed.), *Christianity and Jerusalem: Studies in Modern Theology and Politics in the Holy Land*, Leominster: Gracewing, 2010; Ronald Kronish (ed.), *Coexistence and Reconciliation in Israel: Voices for Interrelgiious Dialogue*, New York: Paulist Press 2015; Una McGahern, *Palestinian Christians in Israel: State attitudes towards non-Muslims in a Jewish state*, Abingdon: Routledge 2011; Julia Droeber, *The Dynamics of Coexistence in the Middle East: Negotiating Boundaries Between Christians, Muslim, Jews and Samaritans in Palestine*, London: I. B. Tauris 2014; Anthony O'Mahony, "Palestinian-Arab Orthodox Christians: Religion, Politics and Church-State Relations in Jerusalem, c. 1908–1925", *Chronos* No. 3, 2000, pp. 61–91; Leonard Marsh, "The Orthodox Church and its Palestinian-Christian Identity", *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 63 (1–2), 255–276, 2011; Samuel J. Kuruvilla, "Palestinian Christian Politics in Comparative Perspective: The Case of Jerusalem's Churches and the Indigenous Arab Christians", *Holy Land Studies* 10. 2 (2011): 199–228.

Critical to Palestinian Christian identity is its plural nature, yet located within an Arab identity that is overwhelmingly Muslim, and subject to Israeli political power, yet also deeply connected to the wider Arab-Muslim world, by virtue of language and culture. Novelist Amin Maalouf, a Lebanese Christian, writes of how he examines his identity in much the way that a person examines their conscience, and of the paradox of being a Christian whilst his mother tongue is also the sacred language of Islam.[190] Much is made by Palestinian writers of the shared linguistic landscape in which Christians and Muslim inhabit but the Christian paradox to which Maalouf refers points to a power dynamic that is not merely about numerical strength but about purchase on a linguistic landscape that is sacred to one and not the other. This has in recent years exaggerated itself due to the geo-political situation, a process that Bernard Sabella calls “fogging” or “clouding” of the national-historical narrative by an asserting of religious identities.[191]

The identity of Palestinian Christianity is therefore framed within a context of plurality, yet it also has a unique historical context given that it holds to an unbroken longevity in the land: for them the continuous Christian presence, beginning with the first Christian community at Pentecost, makes them unique within world Christianity.[192]

Other aspects of early Christian history have a locus in Palestine: it was the home of influential figures such as Origen and Jerome, it became a place of

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[190] Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, New York: Penguin Books 1996, English translation 2000, pp. 2ff.

[191] Bernard Sabella, “Palestine”, in K. R. Ross, M. Tadros and T. M. Johnson (eds), *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, Edinburgh, 2018, pp. 140–151.

[192] See further: Clare Amos, “A nerve centre of the world’s religious life? Perspectives from the World Council of Churches on Israel and Palestine”, https://ctbi. org. uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/A-nerve-centre-of-the-world-paper-for-CTBI; pdf.

intense persecution during the reigns of the Emperors Decius (249–251) and Diocletian (284–305) and was an important context to the unfolding of the monastic movement with the Judean desert becoming an important monastic centre, peppered with thriving monasteries attracting pilgrims.[193] Pilgrimage itself was to become important following the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, whose mother Helena, is often credited with originating the pilgrimage movement. It was from this period that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built in Jerusalem and the Temple to Jupiter built by Hadrian on the remains of the Jewish Temple was destroyed.[194]

This early history is important as it is foundational for the notion that Christianity has an unbroken history in the land. Palestinian Christianity's hermeneutic of presence is not only contemporary but historical. The sense of unbroken ecclesial lineage is an important aspect of Palestinian self-understanding, and this continuity has a liturgical reality too: The liturgy of the Maronite and Syriac churches is descended directly from the time of Jesus Christ, namely Aramaic, whilst the Armenian Church has claimed continuity in terms of its association with the holy places in Jerusalem since the 4th century CE. The Greek Orthodox Church established the patriarchate of Jerusalem following the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) and have historically understood themselves in terms of being the successors to the early

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[193] Documented pilgrimages to the Holy Land can however be traced to earlier periods, including 212 when Bishop Alexander of Cappadocia came to visit holy sites. Eusebius refers to a library for pilgrims created by Alexander. See Donald E. Wagner, *Dying in the Land of Promise*, p. 47f.

[194] A further observation might be that of Christianity's tendency to see itself as the continuation and replacement of Judaism and this is reinforced by the tradition until Hadrian of there being a Jewish (Christian) Bishop in Jerusalem and the growing importance of laying claim to aspects of the land seemed holy from the practice of pilgrimage to the later Crusader period as well as later developments in Christian Zionism.

church.[195]

The churches of the Middle East are frequently talked of belonging broadly to five ecclesial families. (1) The "Assyrian" Church of the East, one of the oldest Christian churches, with its roots in the Nestorian controversies, is sometimes spoken of as the national church of Iraq and Iran. Its Catholic counterpart is the Chaldean Catholic Church that is found in Syria and Lebanon as well as Iran and Iraq. (2) Oriental Orthodox, comprising the Armenian Orthodox, the Coptic churches (Egyptian, Ethiopian and Eritrean) and the Syrian Orthodox Church, all of whom dissented from the Chalcedonian formulations of the 5th century CE[196]. (3) Eastern Orthodox, consisting of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople and Jerusalem, all autocephalous churches, historically holding Greek leadership, with the Patriarch of Antioch generally regarded as the leader of the Orthodox Church in Arab Middle East. (4) Oriental and Eastern Catholic, consisting of the Latin (including Maronite), Melkite (Greek), Syrian, Armenian, Coptic and Chaldean, whilst in recent years there has been the emergence of Hebrew-speaking Catholic congregations in Israel. (5) Anglican and Protestant, churches established in the 19th century, as well as Presbyterian, Baptist and evangelical churches that were planted in the 20th century.[197]

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[195] Bernard Sabella, "Palestine", in E. K. R. Ross, M. Tadros and T. M. Johnson (eds), *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, p. 140f.

[196] I Aram*, In Search of Ecumenical Vision*, Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia Antelias, Lebanon, 2000, pp. 17–27.

[197] Anthony O'Mahony, "Introduction: Christianity in the Middle East", in A. O'Mahony and J. Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, pp. 7–18; A. J. Arberry (ed.), *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Harmony,* Vol. 1, Cambridge, 1969; Deanna Ferree Womack, "Christian Communities in the Contemporary Middle East: An Introduction", *Exchange* 49 (2020), Leiden: Brill, pp. 189–213; Sybil M. Jack: "No Heavenly Jerusalem: The Anglican Bishopric, 1981–83", *The Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, December 1995, pp. 181–203; Michael Marten, *Attempting to Bring the Gospel Home: Scottish Missions to Palestine 1839–1917*, London: I. B. Tauris 2006.

The complexity of Christianity in the region is revealed in an exploration of the Catholic tradition alone. Anthony O’Mahony describes this in detail in terms of the Latin patriarchate of Jerusalem that includes those who are migrant workers and Hebrew-speaking Catholics, and then Catholics who are Maronite, Melkite (Greek), Armenian, Chaldean, Syrian and Coptic. Catholics of the Middle East amount for a fifth of Christians across the region. The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, re-established in 1847 and connected to Crusader interest in the region in the Middle Ages and more recently to growing Western interest in the region. The first Latin Patriarch of Arab identity, Michel Sabbah (consecrated in 1987), has played a pivotal role in articulating a Christian presence in Palestine which is reflected by the fact that the Patriarchate is stronger in the Palestinian territories than in the State of Israel, where the Melkite Catholic Church is larger.[198] Nevertheless in Israel itself the Patriarchate has found itself responding pastorally to migrant Catholic workers and the growth of Hebrew-speaking Catholic congregations.[199]

In Israel itself, the Melkite (Greek Catholic) Church is the larger of the Christian communities. It emerged in the 18th century following a schism with the Orthodox patriarchate of Antioch, and currently occupies a unique place between the Catholic West and the Orthodox East.[200] Yet it is Jerusalem itself that is the primary witness of the plurality of the Christian East as it exists

[198] See Anthony O’Mahony, “Catholics”, in E. K. R. Ross, M. Tadros and T. M. Johnson (eds), *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, Edinburgh 2018, 271–284.
[199] See: David Neuhaus SJ, “The Challenge of New Forms of Christian Presence in the Holy Land,” in Timothy Lowe (ed), *Hope of Unity: Living Ecumenism Today, Celebrating 40 years of the Ecumenical Institute Tantur*, Berlin, Aphorism A, 2013, 133-145; D. Neuhaus: “So That they May Be One: New Ecumenical Dilemmas in Israel-Palestine Today”, *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 2015, pp. 45–58.
[200] Anthony O’Mahony and John Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*; Elias Chacour, *We Belong to the Land*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2000.

today, as Anthony O'Mahony notes with its three patriarchs (Greek, Armenian and Latin), five Catholic patriarchal vicars (Maronite, Greek Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Catholic and Chaldean Catholic), four archbishops (Assyrian, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox and Ethiopian Orthodox) and two Protestant bishops (Anglican and Lutheran).[201]

In broad terms the Christian population of Israel and the Palestinian Territories is estimated to be around 2–3 percent of the overall population; however, Christian numbers in the Palestinian Territories are declining whilst in Israel they have stabilized.[202] Within Christianity itself the largest community would be those who identify as Catholic (which includes Greek/Byzantine, Latins aka Roman Catholics, Maronites, Syrian and Armenian), Orthodox (Greek) and Eastern non-Chalcedonians (Armenian, Syrian, Coptic). These would represent the overwhelming majority of Christians who are Palestinian, with an estimated 50 percent of the total being Greek Orthodox alone. In addition, there are different varieties of Protestant churches (including Anglican[203], Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist and Independent Evangelical/Pentecostal) alongside Messianic Jews.[204] Anglican

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[201] Anthony O'Mahony, "Palestinian Christians: religion, politics and society, c. 1800–1948", in A. O'Mahony (ed), *Palestinian Christians*, pp. 9–55.

[202] David M. Neuhaus, "Catholic Jewish Relations in the State of Israel: Theological Perspectives", in Anthony O'Mahony and John Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, pp. 237–251; "Israel", in K. R. Ross, M. Tadros and T. M. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 127–139.

[203] Anglicans in the Middle East are invariable referred to, and self-define, as Protestant, in contrast to Anglicans more widely who will often self-define in terms of a "bridge tradition: than includes Catholic and Reformed." For the identity of Anglicanism, see further Paul Avis: *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology*, London: TandT Clark, 2007, pp. 18–38.

[204] David Neuhaus, "Catholic-Jewish relations in the State of Israel: Theological Perspectives", in A. O'Mahony and J. Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, pp. 238ff; see also Daphne Tsimhoni, *Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank since 1948: Am Historical, Social and Political Study*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1993; Leonard Marsh: "The Orthodox Church

and Protestant churches are more recent arrivals in the region, mainly through 19th century missionary work. This applies to Anglicans and Lutherans as well as Baptist, Evangelicals and Pentecostal Churches. In addition, there continues to be a Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) presence, in Jerusalem and Tiberius.[205]

The presence of Messianic congregations in Israel is a further complexity and a new development regarding Christian diversity: this is a Christian presence largely derived from migration from the former Soviet Union by people who by virtue of family ties are eligible to make *aliyah* to Israel. David Neuhaus contrasts this phenomenon with the exodus of Palestinians from 1948 onwards.[206] These are sometimes characterized in Israel as "non-Jewish Jews" or as "Jewish Christians", they can be found in some of the historic churches, and sometimes establishing their own Christian communities that aim to offer a Christian witness within mainstream Israeli society. This latter group—which is often held to be problematic by the historic churches as well

and its Palestinian-Christian Identity", *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies 63 (1–2),* 255–276, 2011; L. Marsh: "Palestinian Christians'", *One in Christ: a Catholic Ecumenical Review,* Vol. 41, 2006; L. Marsh: "Palestinian Christianity: A Study in Religion and Politics", *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, Vol. 5, no. 2,2005 (2010) (guest ed. A. O'Mahony).

[205] See further: Sybil Jack, "No Heavenly Jerusalem: The Anglican Bishopric, 1841–83", *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, December 1995, pp. 181–203; Sarah Kochav: "The Search for a Protestant Holy Sepulchre: The Garden Tomb in Nineteenth Century Jerusalem", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 46, No. 2, April 1995, Cambridge University Press, pp. 278–301; Lester G. Pittman: "More than Missionaries: The Anglican Church in Palestine 1918–1948", paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association of North America, 29th Annual Meeting, December 6–10, 1995, Washington DC; Inger Marie Okkenhaug, *The Quality of Heroic Living, of High Endeavour and Adventure: Anglican Mission, Women and Education*, Leiden: Brill 2002; Michael Marten, *Attempting to Bring the Gospel Home: Scottish Mission to Palestine 1839–1917*, London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006.

[206] David Neuhaus, "The Challenge of New Forms of Christian Presence in the Holy Land"; see also Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, London: Cassell, 2000.

as the bulk of Israeli Jews—will often be evangelical[207] and charismatic in expression.

Although it is certainly the case that Western churches have a growing interest in questions of land, these are framed either by a pre-eminent concern with the geo-political issues posed by the Israel-Palestine conflict or by a Western theological discourse where the narrative of Jewish-Christian relations is one where antisemitism and the Holocaust are dominant. At the same time voices from the Middle East that have exerted the most influence on Christian thinking in West have largely been Palestinians from Protestant churches that have the historic roots in Europe and not indigenous to the Middle East. Later in this chapter we will discuss the work of some of those Palestinian theologians and will examine in detail some of the issues of challenge to Western theology.

Firstly however, we will place Palestinian Christianity in its historical and ecclesial context before turning to key themes in Palestinian liberation theology in the late 20th and early 21st century.

3.3 Christianity and the Middle East: its Ecumenical Context

There is nowhere else in the world where Christianity contains such ecclesial diversity with such a distinctive ancient quality.

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[207] In the Middle East context the term "evangelical" can often refer to the churches belonging to the churches of the Reformation, such as Reformed, Lutheran and Presbyterian (i. e. akin to the German meaning of the term "Evangelisch". However in this particular instance it denotes a usage more common in the English speaking West where the ecclesial polity is independent and congregational, the worship is "free" in terms of structure, the hermeneutics are conservative and literalist in tendency, and often charismatic in spirituality.

As we have already seen from its very beginnings, Christianity was a Middle Eastern religion. Sidney Griffith observes that at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the Middle East contained around 50 percent of global Christianity. The character of Christianity in this region needs some careful defining. What has come to be known as Oriental Orthodox Churches, or non-Chalcedonian Churches, recognize the ecumenical councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus but not that of Chalcedon. The schism of the 5th century CE between the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches centred upon the declaration of Christ having two natures, divine and human. The Patriarch of Alexandria had protested that Chalcedon had not made explicit the inseparable quality of the two natures. As such the Non-Chalcedonian churches came to be known as “Monophysite”,[208] a term they rejected and must be regarded as pejorative. Equally problematic are the terms “Nestorianism”, that emphasized the distinct natures of Christ (and is today represented by the Church of East)[209] and the pejorative term “Uniat” referring to Eastern Catholics. Because some of these terms are viewed as pejorative, this research avoids usage of them and instead refers to Non-Chalcedonian Churches and Eastern Christianity.

The theological issues at stake here are well outside the scope of this research, however as Anthony O’Mahony observes, these divisions came to be fossilized under Islamic hegemony, and these have a contemporary impact

[208] “Monophysite”: the Christian belief that Christ had only one divine nature and is held by a Oriental Orthodox Churches. This differences from Chalcedonian Churches who hold to Christ have two natures, human and divine in hypostatic union.
[209] Nestorius was the Patriarch of Constantinople (d. 450CE) and he taught that Christ had two natures but they did not exist in hypostatic union, as taught by the Council of Chalcedon. He also rejected the idea of Mary being *Theotokos* (Mother of God). See further Mar Bawai Soro, *The Church of the East: Apostolic and Orthodox*, San Jose: Adiabene Publications, 2007.

upon the ecumenical, inter-religious and geo-political issues that are at stake when considering the place of land in theology and Jewish-Christian discourse.[210]

Islam arose within this diverse context and many of the churches had presumed that Arab expansion would be a temporary phenomenon however as Islam spread and asserted its authority over the region and its people, Arabic came to be subsumed into Islamic identity, becoming Islam's sacred language, as well as the language of society and commerce. In the perspective of the British born, Lebanese scholar Albert Hourani, for Arab Christians, Arabic was theirs, yet at the same time it was not. This ontological ambiguity would continue for Christian communities who lived entirely within Arabic culture and is particularly acute at the present time.[211] In time the various churches would attempt an enculturation of Christianity into the Arabic-Islamic culture, through the translation of scripture and other Christian writings into Arabic,[212] centuries before leaders of the Reformation in Europe came to see the translation of scripture in the vernacular as critical to the reform of the church. Thus, Christianity became part of an Islamic culture where they, along with others including and especially Jews, were to be

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[210] Anthony O'Mahony: "Christianity in the Middle East", in A. O'Mahony and John Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, pp. 7–18; And it should also be observed that the manner in which relations between the Catholic West and the Orthodox East have grown warmer through ecumenical dialogue and convergence, is an important part of the context in which Jewish-Christian relations tilts eastwards.

[211] Hourani discusses how in the 18th and 19th century, encounters with European culture offered some Arab Christians the possibility of breaking free from the constraints of Arab culture. He suggests that it is no coincidence that some of the intellectuals that broke free found a home in the Protestantism established by American and British missionaries in the mid-19th century. See Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798–1939*, Cambridge, 1962, revised 1983, pp. 95ff.

[212] Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, pp. 48ff; Sidney H. Griffith: "Arabic Christian Relations with Islam: Retrieving from History, Expanding the Canon", in A. O'Mahony and J. Flannery, *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, pp. 263–290.

granted a status of subservient protection. As Sidney Griffith points out, this was even the case where Christians were not the numerical minority. Some Christian texts of this period report their "relief" at being "liberated" from Byzantine taxation with the advent of Arab conquest,[213] yet such "liberation" would present Christianity with new and far-reaching challenges. Under Muslim rule the divisions that arose from previous theological disputations not only continued but to some extent were amplified as Christian writers sought to justify their own theological positions as much in terms of one another as to the growing Islamic geo-political context. Thus, we might note that the dominant and abrogating tendency of Islam did not provoke an ecumenical response but rather an ecclesial apologetic. [214]

Up until the time of the Mongol invasion and the Crusades there had been considerable efforts in using the vehicle of Arabic to make the case for Christianity. This served a dual purpose, on the one hand to make the case to Muslims as to the reasonableness of Christianity in Arab culture, and on the other to Christians who might be considering conversion to Islam. St. John of Damascus (c.675–749CE) is an important figure in this context. Often read from the perspectives of scholars interested in Eastern Patristic theology with an eye to Constantinople, Mansur ibn Sarjun (John's Arabic name) lived all his life outside the circle of Byzantine influence, dying in his monastery in Jerusalem. Indeed, in his time John was often characterized pejoratively by Byzantine figures as "Saracen-minded" and he lived all his life in a dominant Islamic context and therefore his work aims to position Christianity in this

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[213] Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, p. 27f.
[214] Griffiths, in A. O'Mahony and J. Flannery, *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, p. 269f.

context in terms of permanency. Sidney Griffith argues that when we understand John within his Arabic context, his work fits very well within the theological and social concerns of the Oriental Orthodox context of his time.[215] John is particularly known for his description of Islam as a Christian heresy. This has sometimes been read as total condemnation and repudiation, but rather it is opening up significant distance between Christianity and Islam and, arguably, aims to make theological sense of one's immediate and close neighbours. John had claimed that Muhammad's discovery of the Bible was with the help of an Arian monk (indeed, one of the Islamic traditions maintained that the boy Muhammad had been schooled by a Christian monk) and had subsequently developed his own "heresy".[216] Arianism is interesting in this context as it held to a non-Trinitarian Christology that taught that Jesus was begotten of the Father and subordinate to him, something that Islam specifically repudiates.[217] The tendency in the Western Catholic tradition has been to understand these Eastern Christian controversies as a deviation from Catholic orthodoxy rather than as part of the wider context of Christian development both in ecumenical terms and in relation to the emergence of Islam. John Henry Newman (1801–90) is a notable example of this tendency, where Arianism and Nestorianism are cast in almost proto-Protestant terms:

[215] Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 40ff.
[216] The tradition that Muhammad had been schooled by a Christian monk seems to have had two contradictory functions: for Muslims it was an early recognition of signs of Muhammad's prophethood by someone from one of the two existing monotheistic faiths, whilst for Christians it undermined claims of Muhammad's originality. See Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammad*, London: Penguin, 1961 (English translation), pp. 46ff.
[217] See further, Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, revised edition, 2002.

> The history of that school is summed up in the broad characteristic fact, on the one hand that it devoted itself to the literal and critical interpretation of Scripture, and on the other that it gave rise first to the Arian and then to the Nestorian heresy. In all ages of the Church, her teachers have shown a disinclination to confine themselves to the mere literal interpretation of Scripture. Her most subtle and powerful method of proof, whether in ancient or modern times, is the mystical sense, which is so frequently used in doctrinal controversy as on many occasions to supersede any other. In the early centuries we find this method of interpretation to be the very ground for receiving as revealed the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.[218]

The 19th century Swiss Protestant theologian Philip Schaff (who taught mostly in the United States) even makes the claim that Arianism "proceeded from the bosom of the Catholic church", rather than locate it in its rightful Eastern context.[219] And more recently, Christopher D. L. Johnson has suggested that this Orientalizing tendency continues amongst Western Christians who seek to be the rescuers who alone can rejuvenate Eastern Christianity.[220]

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[218] John Henry Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, Note 1. The Syrian school of Theology, Longmans, Green, and Co. London, New York, Bombay and Calcutta, 1908, https://www. newmanreader. org/works/arians/note1. html [accessed 10/05/21].
[219] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume 3, p. 124. It is noteworthy that Schaff, a leading figure in the German Reformed Church in the United States, sought unity with Rome through the dropping of the doctrine of Papal Infallibility, and thus part of the same intellectual trajectory as Newman, although never joined the Catholic Church. What both Newman and Schaff share is a reading of the diverse Eastern Christian tradition through the lens of Protestant and Anglican desires to find a unity with Rome over and against the increasingly schismatic tendencies of evangelical churches.
[220] Christopher D. L. Johnson: "'He Had Made the Dry Bones Live': Orientalism's Attempted Resuscitation of Eastern Christianity", *Journal of American Academy of Religion*, September 2014, Vol. 82, No. 3, pp. 811–840.

But Arianism ought correctly to be placed in its Eastern context and as Hugh Goddard suggests, if Arianism was to be regarded as “Christian heresy” there was no reason why Islam could not be viewed as another manifestation of a heterodox movement on the fringes of Christianity. And placed within its wider context of the many theological controversies that beset Eastern Christianity at the time, this concern reflects not only a desire to seek understanding of Islam for Christians but underlines the extent to which the Christianity of John’s context was intimately intertwined with that of Islam, and is in many ways, distant from the concerns of Rome and Byzantium.[221] This may also help to explain why it was that the different Christian traditions did not seek a common ecumenical voice in response to Islam and instead asserted their own individual ecclesial apologetics as a response to their place within a religiously plural context, of which the message of Muhammad was but another feature. It is important to recognize that in this early Islamic period, churches of Eastern tradition, in their attempt to come to terms with this phenomenon did not take the view that Islam was something totally other but regarded Muslims as belonging to the same culture as themselves whilst seeing crucial areas of divergence. This is particularly the case when we consider some of the earliest surviving Christian texts and what they suggest in terms of the range of attempts to enculturate Christianity in the Arabic culture. Griffith offers a range of examples of this, and it is worth mentioning two of these to illustrate the point: The tract known as the “Summary of the Ways of Faith”, copied by Stephen of Ramla in 877CE at the Monastery of

[221] See further, Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, Edinburgh 2000, pp. 38ff.

Mar Cariton in Palestine points to the practice of Christians making use of the Islamic *shahadah* and trying to make it their own, and the use of Arabic to conceal their Christian identity for fear of molestation. Meanwhile the writing of Theodore Abū Qurrah (c. 755-c. 830)—a Melkite, originally from Syria, but may have spent time at a monastery in the Judean desert—suggests that some Christians were abandoning the practice of icon veneration for fear of being misconstrued as idolatrous. Theodore is a figure of significance for our enquiry given that he seems to have been one of the first Christians to write theology in Arabic and because he is associated with the Jerusalem ecclesial context. Given that Theodore's work is some of the only writings from this period it may point to a wider Arabic Christian reality of this period.[222] Whilst not wanting to dwell too much on an historical overview of this period of Christian history it is important to place Palestinian Christianity in this context both historical and Eastern. Griffith further suggests to us that it was in this early Islamic period that, as the non-Chalcedonian churches sought to defend their Christology in Arabic writings, that their confessional identities came to full maturity. In other words, it was Arabic and the Islamic context that helped to form the ecclesial identity of the Eastern Church, with Arabic becoming an ecclesiastical as much as a cultural language.[223]

Much later, the fall of Constantinople in 1453 had several consequences in respect of Christianity and the land. The first was that through the establishment of the millet system,[224] itself a development of Islamic polity

[222] Sidney H. Griffiths, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, pp. 60ff.
[223] Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, p. 62ff.
[224] See A. O'Mahony, "Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society, c. 1800–1948", in A. O'Mahony (ed.), *Palestinian Christians: Religion, Politics and Society in the Holy Land*, pp. 17–27.

towards religious minorities, gave Orthodox churches particular standing within the Ottoman system, whilst Latin Christians looked elsewhere for their support.[225] The second consequence was that Eastern Christianity was now firmly under the polity of Islam and thus its relationship to the land was inseparable from Arabic-Islamic culture. Christians would continue to be sensitive to this matter, resisting the term "minority" as it implies transience and non-belonging, whereas historically the churches of the region have sought, as we have seen, to enculturate themselves, rather than to look elsewhere for their unity and belonging. This is an important ecumenical question to which we will return later in this research.

The rapid numerical decline of Christianity from the around the 13th century, saw a waning interest in Arabic as a means of Christian apologetic and mission.[226] Thus the place of Christians (and Jews) within an Islamic polity came to be of particular significance. The status of *al-dhimm*i was granted to Christians and Jews under Islamic polity. This granted protection for Jews and Christians in return for the payment of a poll tax, *jizya*. Yohanan Friedmann points out that in the classical Islamic period there was a spectrum amongst Muslim legal opinion with regard to those regarded as People of the Book.[227] This includes on the one hand the very restrictive (e.g. those who have Muslim ancestry, those than move from "infidelity" to a non-Islamic religion are not to be given *dhimmi* protection, and those that refuse to recognize Muhammad's prophethood are to be executed), to the more lenient (for

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[225] See Leonard Marsh, "The Orthodox Church and its Palestinian-Christian Identity", *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 63(1–2), 255–276, 2011.
[226] Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the* Mosque, p. 20ff.
[227] Friedmann, pp. 22ff.

example, whilst Arab Christians are often viewed as standing outside the dispensations for the People of the Book, dhimmitude could be granted if they had been persecuted by Arab polytheists). Further to this latter point, Friedmann also reveals a body of legal Islamic opinion in the classical period that Arab Christians (and Jews) were not defined as People of the Book, as the religion that Muhammad had brought was intended to unify an Arab nation. Thus, the continuation of Arab Christianity (and Judaism) was problematic for Islamic self-understanding. This underlines some of the complexity that Palestinian Christians face in developing a contextual Arab theology and Christian identity.[228] Dhimmitude was a social consciousness externally imposed and within this totalizing Arabic world of Islam, Christians (and Jews) had to find their own place within it. For many the option of conversion to Islam was very appealing, especially for the wealthy and educated, eager to contribute to society. Meanwhile for those choosing to remain Christian different modes of living were found, and whilst there was much that had a negative impact on communities, dhimmitude offered cultural opportunities whereby Christianity could make an effective contribution to Arabic culture, not least in the active Christian involvement in 8th and 9th century Baghdad where the literature of Greek civilization was being translated into Arabic.[229]

The impact on Christian communities of its *al-dhimmi* status was deep and profound. It would lead to the decline of Christian presence in this region, and for the Christian communities that remained they would have to find a place

[228] Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition*, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 58–69.
[229] Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, pp. 17ff.

for themselves within a context where the abrogating tendency of Islam towards Christianity (and Judaism) would define how churches would find their place within Arab society, no less so that in Palestine itself.

Samuel Kuruvilla suggests that the Greek character of some of the churches helped to reinforce the idea that Christianity was itself something foreign that could justifiably be suppressed or at least curtailed. The churches that were orientated towards Byzantium (Greek) and the Maronites (Latin) can sometimes be perceived as having external origin, compounded by the practice until recently of appointing Latin and Greek patriarchs. Kuruvilla in his study of "liberation theology in the Middle East" arguably overstates this point especially when he attempts to make his case for an historical context for the emergence of liberation theologies in Palestine and Israel, overlooking for the most part Oriental Orthodox Churches in the region and the only theologians which he cites are, ironically, members of churches established during the colonial period.[230] Indeed, there is scant referencing of Eastern Christian traditions and their sources with only mention of intra-Christian squabbling:

> The Churches tended to spend more time fighting each other than they did in countering the ruling authorities in Istanbul. The different Christian Churches and Christian groups of Jerusalem spent most their time poisoning the ears of Ottoman authorities in Istanbul as regards the activities and aspirations of their rival fellow-Christian groups in the Holy City.[231]

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[230] Samuel Kuruvilla, *Radical Christianity in Palestine and Israel: Liberation and Theology in the Middle East*, London: I. B. Tauris, pp. 1–28.
[231] Kuruvilla, *Radical Christianity*, p. 9f.

We will return to this difficulty later in this chapter, needless to say there is a pervasive anti-Eastern impulse to much of the writing on Palestinian Christianity whereby the most widely read source material is that written for a Western audience by theologians some of whom are ecclesially situated in non-Eastern traditions such as Anglican and Lutheran. Thus, we now turn to the ecclesial character of an important part of Palestinian Christianity at the present time, albeit a significantly smaller presence as we noted earlier in this chapter. They are significant for our consideration of the eastward tilt of the Jewish-Christian encounter because their writings are readily available in English and are influential a number of Western ecclesial discourses.

3.4 Protestant Presence in the Holy Land

Protestant ecclesial presence in Palestine (and indeed the wider Middle East) is for the most part no older than the 19th century yet Western Christian Churches (especially Protestant and Anglican churches) in their engagement with Palestinian issues often only relates to the clergy and leaders of these churches and even sometimes unaware of the wider Christian ecclesial demographic.[232] This can be problematic as there is a tendency to view Palestinian Christianity through a Western Protestant lens. That there are Protestant churches in Palestine (and the Middle East) is, on the face of it, incongruous as in theological terms “the land” has been spiritualized for Christ had universalized the covenantal promises. There are two important, and related factors, that explain Protestant presence in the Holy Land: Christian

[232] See further, Samuel J. Kuruvilla, “Palestinian Christian Politics in Comparative Perspective: The Case of Jerusalem’s Churches and the Indigenous Arab Christians”, *Holy Land Studies*, 10. 2 (2011): 199–228, pp. 199–228, especially pp. 221ff.

Zionism and colonialism. So, before we turn to the writings of Palestinian theologians, something of this historical context needs to be outlined.

Christian Zionism is the belief in the return of the Jewish people to the Holy Land as a precursor to the Parousia or Second Coming of Christ. It is therefore referred to as “Restorationism” and has its roots amongst the 17th century English Puritans and it gained ground amongst evangelicals in the 19th century. This restorationist tradition included figures such as the renowned Baptist preacher C. H. Spurgeon, the Presbyterian and the subsequent founder of the Catholic Apostolics Edward Irving, the first Bishop of Liverpool J. C. Ryle and the social reformer Anthony Ashley Cooper (7th Earl of Shaftesbury). Into this understanding belongs the “dispensationalism” of figures such as John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) who taught that Christ’s return would first be to the Gentiles to gather them into heaven, and then to the Jews who have gathered into Palestine.[233]

Spurgeon’s words illustrate the theological fervour of this movement:

> It is certain that the Jews, as a people, will yet own Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David as their King, and that they will return to their own land, and they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair at the old cities, the desolations of many generations … For when the Jews are restored, the fullness of

[233] *A Land of Promise? An Anglican Exploration of Christian Attitudes to the Holy Land with special reference to Christian Zionism*, London: Anglican Consultative Council 2012, second edition 2014, pp. 37f; Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Politics of Apocalypse: A History and Influence of Christian Zionism*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006; Marchadour and Neuhaus, op. cit., pp. 198ff; Elizabeth Philips, “We have read the end of the book: An engagement with contemporary Christian Zionism through the eschatology of John Howard Yoder”, *Studies in Christian Ethics*; 2008, Vol. 21 Issue 3, pp. 342–361; Robert O. Smith, *More Desired than Our Own Salvation: The Roots of Christian Zionism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

> the Gentiles shall be gathered in; and as soon as they return, then Jesus will come up on Mount Zion with his ancients gloriously, and the halcyon days of the millennium shall then dawn; we shall then know every man to be a brother and friend; Christ shall rule with universal sway.[234]

Dispensationalism believes that God relates to the world in different ways according to different "epochs" in which God relates to humanity, for example, through the Abraham Covenant and the post-New Testament period. But it also holds to a view of the end times when the Jews would be gathered into Israel, which will herald the return of Christ when Jews and Gentiles will recognize the Kingship of Christ. Arguably, these forms of Christian Zionism reflect an evangelical impulse to escape this world, so dominated by the non-theistic discourse of the Enlightenment and hasten the Parousia and the end of human history and carried with it also Western Christianity's deep antipathy towards Jewish flourishing. In any event, Christian Zionism is not an attempt to overcome centuries of anti-Judaic discourse but recovering a sense of sibling belonging and rather an instrumentalization of Judaism and its prophetic tradition. As Robert O. Smith observes:

> (They) found a vocabulary to describe their unique vocation in the Biblical narratives of the Children of Israel: their sufferings, their liberations, their rejection and redemption, their unique covenantal

[234] An extract from a sermon by C. H. Spurgeon, quoted in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Politics of the Apocalypse: The History and Influence of Christian Zionism*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2006, p. 8f. Spurgeon was one of the more famous 19th century English Non-Conformist preachers who attracted very large congregations and who were highly influential in society and in politics.

> relationship with God who was and who would continue to be active in history.[235]

Smith is speaking specifically about how the roots of Christian Zionist thinking in the United States are to be found in the religious and political fervour of the English Puritan settlers, and its strength as a religious discourse in the politics of the United States is critical to understanding how Christian Zionist, past and present, has a particular role within the current Israel-Palestine conflict. It takes the view that there is an impending apocalypse that will end human history, and therefore has an uncritical support of the State of Israel in order to hasten the ingathering of Jews into the promised land, thus resolving history according to their view of theology.[236]

Given that various sources estimate that the number of Christians in the United States who hold to a dispensationalist theology are upwards of 30 million, this has a critical impact upon Christian literature concerning the land. Much recent church policy making in the United States and the UK has demonstrated a concern with countering such theological ideas as part of the broader response to the Israel-Palestine conflict, but this is often confused with Christians who are sympathetic to the State of Israel out of their

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[235] Robert O. Smith, *More Desired than our own salvation: The Roots of Christ Zionism*, Oxford, 2013, p. 117.
[236] *A Land of Promise? pp.* 6f.

commitment to Jewish-Christian dialogue.[237] Similarly the response to Christian Zionism is a significant part of the context of a corpus of literature from European and North American theologians,[238] and its also influences the way in which many Palestinian Christian theologians speak to the church globally, particularly within the World Council of Churches.

Christian Zionism provides some of the historical context for the establishment of Protestant traditions in the Holy Land and is of critical importance to Palestinian Christian self-understanding and the emergence of Palestinian theology of the land who regard it as having a corrosive effect on Western Christianity's ability to hear the voice of Palestinian churches.[239]

Given the Orientalist and the semi-Orientalist views of eastern Christianity, Christian Zionism has an inbuilt disapprobation towards the indigenous Christians of the region, although the Anglican Consultative Council report "A Land of Promise? An Anglican Exploration of Christian Attitudes to the Holy Land with special reference to Christian Zionism" draws the distinction between Christians who are sympathetic to the aspirations of Jewish Zionism

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[237] For example, the Presbyterian Church of the USA stated in 2004: "In that position, the church accepts its special covenant relationship with God in Christ, in continuity with God's covenant with the people of Israel, and implicitly rejects fundamentalist, dispensationalist interpretations equating the birth of the modern state of Israel as a literal fulfilment of the Biblical promise, and as such the beginning of Armageddon, the end-time battle in which the Jews would ultimately have to be converted or destroyed" (Resolution on Israel and Palestine: End the Occupation Now: https://www. pcusa. org/site_media/media/uploads/_resolutions/endoccupation03. pdf [accessed 13/09/2015]); its sister church, the Church of Scotland, in its 2013 report "The Inheritance of Abraham: A report on 'the promised land'" also seeks to counter Christian Zionist ideas http://www. churchofscotland. org. uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/14050/the_Inheritance_of_Abraham. pdf (accessed 27/04/2017).

[238] See for example Rosemary Radford Reuther and Herman J. Reuther, *The Wrath of Jonah: The Crisis of Religious Nationalism in the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002, pp. 174–182.

[239] Writings by Palestinian Christians and those sympathetic to their situation almost always make some reference to the influence of mostly American Christian Zionism. This includes Eastern orthodox theologian Paul Nadim Tarazi, *Land and Covenant*, St. Paul Minnesota: Ocabs Press, 2009.

and those whose Christian Zionism is a more of a parallel movement that pre-dates and often exists outside Jewish-Zionist thinking.

It was also politically influential on figures such as Arthur Balfour (the originator of the Balfour Declaration that is generally seen as promising a homeland for the Jews in Palestine) and Winston Churchill, the latter seeing Restorationism as a necessary response to pogroms in Russia. Politics and evangelical theology were therefore frequently fused together.

Having established the importance of Christian Zionism in the 19th century, we now turn to the origins of Protestant ecclesial presence in the Holy Land. The Lutheran and Anglican traditions begin their Middle Eastern presence in the 19th century with the growing interest of European powers in the region. Britain and Germany both developed a specific interest in Palestine which was to lead to the establishment of a joint bishopric in Jerusalem in 1841. Jerusalem is the place in which differing identities converge and collide significant for Muslims and Jews alike, and for Palestinians it is, in the words of Ronald Storrs, a “citadel of identity”.[240] It was to become a city of strategic importance for European powers. The circumstances that led to the establishment of the bishopric are not entirely clear and there is disagreement amongst historians as to who initiated the idea. Some have suggested that Britain was especially interested in the idea as it created a foothold within the Ottoman Empire, and that it enabled the introduction of episcopacy into the

[240] Ronald Storrs, *Orientations*, London, 1939, p. 352. Storrs was the first British Military Governor of Jerusalem in 1917 and in 1921 became the first Civil Governor of Jerusalem and Judea until 1926. He therefore played a critical role in the early period of the British Mandate. His memoires were published by the Reader’s Union in 1939.

Prussian Lutheran Church.[241] The appointment of a Jewish convert, Michael Solomon Alexander, however, was also set within the context of growing interest of missionary organizations, particularly the London Society for Promotion of Christianity Amongst the Jews and the Church Missionary Society and the flourishing movement of Christians who advocated the restoration of the Jews to Palestine as a precursor to the Second Coming of Christ. Thus, a Protestant ecclesial presence in the Holy Land would play an evangelistic role in returning Jews in readiness for the Parousia.[242] Once again we see European imperial politics becoming fused with evangelical fervour.

The creation of the joint bishopric also played an important part in many Anglo-Catholics (most notably John Henry Newman) ceding to the Roman Catholic Church, as they judged the Church of England's acknowledgement of the (Lutheran) Augsburg Confession to be an indicator that it lacked apostolicity. Therefore, what we see is numerous ecumenical and ecclesial implications to the creation of the Joint Bishopric. These include the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people, especially in an

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[241] Sybil M. Jack, "No Heavenly Jerusalem: The Anglican Bishopric, 1841–83", *The Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, December 1995, pp. 181–203; see also, Lester G. Pittman, "More than Missionaries: The Anglican Church in Palestine 1918–1948", paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association of North America, 29th Annual Meeting, December 6–10, 1995, Washington DC; Brian Taylor, "Alexander's Apostasy: First Steps to Jerusalem, *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 29 (1992), pp. 363–371; Caesar E. Farah, "Protestantism and Politics: The 19th Century Dimension in Syria", in David Kushner (ed), *Palestine and in the Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic Transformation*, Leiden: Brill, 1986, pp. 320–340; Patrick Irwin, "Bishop Alexander and the Jews of Jerusalem", *Studies in Church History*, Vol. 23 (1984).

[242] This period of Protestant interest in the Holy Land has been the subject a a number of scholarly studies. See for instance Michael Marten, *Attempting to Bring the Gospel Home: Scottish Missions to Palestine 1839–1917*, London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006; Inger Marie Okkenhaug, *The Quality of Heroic Living, of High Endeavour and Adventure: Anglican Mission, Women and Education in Palestine, 1888–1948*, Leiden, Boston, Cologne: Brill, 2002.

eschatological sense, the relationship between Anglicanism and Lutheranism, notions of apostolicity and episcopacy, relations between post-Reformation churches and the Catholic Church in Rome. And given that the original focus concerned the establishment of Protestant episcopal presence in Jerusalem, for overtly theological (millenarian) and political (imperialist) reasons, these matters have a direct bearing upon our considerations about theology and inter religious dialogue in the Holy Land.

What is generally not remarked upon is that the missionaries who came to the Middle East brought with them a considerable body of polemic against Eastern Christian traditions, especially those that were of non-Chalcedonian heritage. They reflected an historic view of non-Chalcedonian churches as lacking orthodoxy due to the disputations around the nature of Christ. Christopher D. L. Johnson places this within the cultural critique of Orientalism. He quotes for instance influential theologian and church historian Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) who described eastern Christian traditions as existing in a "state of petrification, barrenness and barbarism", and Johnson observes that the Eastern Christianity was viewed not only as falling short doctrinally but was also deficient in terms of culture and morality that could only be redeemed by way of Western intervention. Whilst figures such as Harnack were undoubtedly influenced by a Reformation understanding of what constituted true Christian religion, this has become fused with a cultural critique of the Orient.[243] A further illustration of this point is served by John Henry Newman, who in assessing his own Anglican theology that he was

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[243] Christopher D. L. Johnson, "'He has Made the Dry Bones Live': Orientalism's Attempted Resuscitation of Eastern Christianity", *Journal of American Academy of Religion*, September 2014, Vol. 82, No. 3, No. 3, pp. 811–840.

moving away from, declared “I saw my face in that mirror and I was a Monophysite.” In other words, Newman had judged Protestantism against a received understanding of more ancient traditions that had been viewed as unorthodox.[244] In fact we might argue that the term “monophysite” can come to be synonymous with a state of almost irreversible unorthodoxy. Johnson suggests that this approach from various Christian theologians of the West can be called “semi-Orientalism” by which the Orientalism as described by scholars such as Edward Said is combined with a view of Eastern Christianity as not fully Oriental, what Maria N. Todorova describes as standing “in the shadow of the Orient”.[245]

This latter point is critical to understanding the world view and motivation of Christian missionaries from the West who viewed Eastern Christians as more fertile territory for conversion that Muslims or Palestinian Jews.

Eastern Christianity was viewed as

> a Frankenstein constructed of the remnants of once-living Christian cultures, and the goal of Western scholars and missionaries is to eventually reanimate it for their own purposes.[246]

Furthermore, Albert Hourani suggests that for some Arab Christians, the encounter with European Protestantism offered a tempting route out of the

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[244] See John Cornwall, *Newman’s Unquiet Grave: The Reluctant Saint*, London: Continuum, 2010, pp. 71ff , 164ff; Sheridan Gilley, *Newman and his Age*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990, pp. 188ff.

[245] Maria N. Todorova, “The Balkans: From Discovery to Invention”, *Slavic Review* 53/2, pp. 453–482, quoted in Christian D. J. Johnson, op. cit.

[246] Johnson, p. 814. He identifies ten depictions of Eastern Christianity: “(1) as dead body (2) as unevolved or devolved specimen, (3) as static or ahistorical relic of the past, (4) as mongrel monstrosity, (5) as rival to non-Christians in terms of barbarity, (6) as passive and helpless victim of oppression and inertia, (7) as garish exhibit, (8) as superficially civilized but actual Oriental, (9) as missionary trophy, and (10) as corrective to perceived faults with Western Christianity. ”

cultural straight-jacket of the Arab world, dominated as it was by an Islamic polity.[247] Nevertheless, Protestant traditions in the Middle East have nurtured some of the more widely ready theological commentaries on the Israel-Palestine, and it is them that we now turn.

3.5 Palestinian Theology of Land: Lutheran Perspectives

Earlier in this chapter we have outlined the context for consideration of Palestinian theologies of land, both in terms of the Eastern character of Christianity in the region, and the place of Protestant Christianity in the Holy Land. In this chapter we turn specifically to attempts towards developing a Palestinian theology of land from within the Lutheran tradition. As already stated, it is because these writers have considerable influence upon policy making within the World Council of Churches and individual Protestant denominations in Europe and North America, that we are examining their work in close detail. However, to begin with we place Lutheran writings within the corpus of current Palestinian writings.

The corpus of Palestinian Christian literature is relatively small. Most prominent of these include Michel Sabbah (Latin Catholic), Elias Chacour (Greek Catholic), Naim Ateek (Anglican), Munib Younan, Mitri Raheb and Munther Isaac (Lutherans). [248] It is Lutherans Younan and Raheb that are the

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[247] Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1962, pp.245ff.

[248] It informs the wider ecumenical context in which they write to mention briefly the emphasis of other writers. Sabbah and Chacour speak out of the Catholic tradition. Michel Sabbah (b. 1933), was until 2008, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Elias Chacour (b. 1939) was until 2014, Archbishop of Akko, Haifa, Nazareth and all Galilee of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church. Sabbah, in his various pastoral letters has both emphasized the importance of peaceful living in imitation of Christ but also the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle. He was

main focus of this chapter particularly because of their influential role within world Christianity.

Mitri Raheb, the Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem (the city of his birth), speaks of the importance of his identity as one rooted in the land but also of enduring historical legacy:

> My identity was stamped by the fact that I was born in this particular place … My self-understanding as a Christian Palestinian has a territorial dimension. I feel that I am living in a continuity of locale with these Biblical figures, sharing the same landscape, culture and environment with them. One need not make a pilgrimage, since one is already at the source itself, at the point of origin. That is why this city of Bethlehem and this land of Palestine are enormously important to me. They do not merely help me live, they are part of my identity.[249]

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one of the first writers to identify a problem that exists within Old Testament hermeneutics in the Palestinian context, whereby difficulties with particular texts could lead towards a new Macionism, the early Christian dualist belief that rejected the Old Testament and the God of Israel, denounced by Tertullian as a heresy in 208CE. Samuel Keruvilla suggests that Sabbah may well have in mind the writings of those such as Ateek who hold a more liberationist emphasis; see S. J. Kuruvilla: "Reading the Bible in Palestine: Letters abd Speeches of Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah", book review of S. J. Drew Christiansen and Saliba Sarsar (eds), *Patriach Michel Sabbah—Faithful Witness: On reconciliation and Peace in the Holy Land.* (Hyde Park: New City Press 2009), *HLS* 8. 2 (2009) 239–25. Sabbah also identifies a particular hemeneutical challenge in relation to the land: both the claims of many Israeli Jews and Christian Zionists about the what the Bible declares to be the intended proprietorial nature of the Land; see Michel Sabbah: "Reading the Bible Today in the Land of the Bible" Fourth Pastoral Letter of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem http://www. lpj. org/newsite2006/patriarch/pastoral-letters/1993/readingthebible_en. html. (accessed 16/04/2023)
Elias Chacour meanwhile has promoted dialogue and study between Christians, Druze, Jews and Muslims as a means of reconciliation, as the only route to true liberation. An Israeli Arab, he self defines as a Palestinian-Arab-Christian-Israeli. Chacour's writings include, *We Belong to the Land*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2000, and *Blood Brothers*, Ada, Chosen Books, 2003. In his speeches to and discussions with Western Christians he has welcomed Western friendship to both Israelis and Palestinians but would reject that friendship if it meant despising one side or another.

[249] Mitri Raheb, *I am a Palestinian Christian*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, p. 3f.

Munib Younan is a Palestinian, who was born in the Old City of Jerusalem. His parents were rendered refugees by the 1948 Israeli War of Independence/*al-Nakba*, and Younan continues to hold a United Nations Relief and Works Agency Permit which not only identifies him as a refugee but also, as he often suggests, with all Palestinians who have been rendered refugees. He was educated in Lutheran schools after which he studied at Luther Opisto College in Järvenpää, Finland (1969–72), the University of Helsinki (1972–76), with postgraduate study at the Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago (1988). He was ordained as a Lutheran pastor in 1976 and following periods as a pastor of local congregations in Jerusalem, Beit Jala and Ramallah he became, in 1998, the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land, and was elected as the President of the Lutheran World Federation.[250] Thus he has both a specific context in relation to the Land, whilst being formed as a Christian minister outside the context of Palestine itself; firmly rooted in the Palestinian Christian context whilst looking to the Christian world beyond. Like a number of other Palestinian writers his writings are largely written for a non-Arab readership and directed at a global Christian readership, attested to by the fact that his writings are published primarily in English. Younan's thought is largely contained in his two books, *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and the World* (2003), and *Our Shared Witness: A Voice for Justice and Reconciliation* (2012) and numerous sermons, speeches and articles.

[250] Munib A. Younan, *Our Shared Witness: A Voice for Justice and Reconciliation*. Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2012, pp. 5–10.

He begins with how the Christians of the Middle East are often perceived by Western Christians:

> Invariably, I am asked by American and European visitors about my Christian origins. People are curious about me in particular and about Palestinian Christians in general … It seems that most people have a simplistic assumption that we have converted from Islam or Judaism. People forget that the message of salvation, crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ emanated from Jerusalem … We, the Christian community of Jerusalem have a long, unbroken history of faithful witness to the Gospel of Jesus.[251]

Clearly Younan is writing primarily with a Western audience in mind, and especially the Lutheran World Federation in mind.[252] Indeed, Younan along with other Palestinian Christian writers, such as Raheb and Naim Ateek (b. 1937), writes and publishes in English (and sometimes German) rather than Arabic, revealing their intended audiences. Younan's later book *Our Shared Witness: A Voice for Justice and Reconciliation* is clearly written for the international Lutheran World Federation. There is therefore an ambiguity within Younan's work (and indeed other Arab Protestant writings) as to whether or not they regard themselves and their theology as "Middle Eastern", writing for an Arab-speaking audience (and thus developing a contextual theology) belonging as they do to churches planted by European churches and writing for Western consumption. Writers such as Raheb and Ateek

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[251] Munib A. Younan, *Witnessing for Peace: In Jerusalem and in the* World, Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2003, p. 3.
[252] Bishop Younan was elected as President of the Lutheran World Federation at its Stuttgart Assembly in 1910.

clearly attempt to fashion a theology that is more distinctly Arab. This is a particularly important theme in numerous Palestinian Christian writings. Father Rafiq Khoury—a Latin Catholic Priest—suggests that relations with Muslims is a particular vocation for Middle East Christians. Yet he sees dangers in attempting to create a separate Christian identity in the region that is homogenous in character but rather needs to develop a truly ecumenical identity within a predominately Islamic culture.[253]

Raheb seeks to interpret a contextual Christianity within Arab society and wishes to go further than simply co-existence. Arab identity is important to Raheb and the shared language and culture of Arabic with Islam is a critical issue for him. Like other Palestinian writers he emphasizes a strong connection to Arab Muslims, but he also views Arabic as the shared space between Christians and Muslims that has existed for centuries. He examines this in detail through the exploration of the relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an which we will explore later in the section on hermeneutics.[254]

However, we should note some of the long-standing tensions within Muslim-Christian co-existence in the Middle East, not least the long impact of the status of *al-dhimmi*. Naim Ateek has suggested that Orthodox Churches of the East have experienced a longstanding difficulty within the predominately Muslim Arab world because of the association of Christianity with the Crusades. Yet the uneasy relationship of Christianity to Islam predates the Crusade period of history.

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[253] Samuel J. Kuruvilla, "Theologies of Liberation in Latin America and Palestine-Israel in Comparative Perspective: Contextual Differences and Practical Similarities", *HLS 9. 1 (2010)* 51–69.
[254] Mitri Raheb, "Contextualizing the Scripture: Towards a New Understanding of the Qur'an—An Arab Christian Perspective", *Studies in World Christianity*, October 1997, pp. 180–201.

What we have established, however, is how Palestinian Christian identity has been caught between two religious narratives: the first is Jewish-Zionist whereby the State of Israel takes unto itself Biblical nomenclature, with even the word “Palestine” having Judaic overtones. The second is Arab Islam, whereby a continuing Arab Christian identity is at the very least ambiguous in relation to classical Islamic self-understanding.

3.6 History and the Land: A journey into a Palestinian Narrative Theology

For Younan history and chronology are matters of theology and identity and not just a linear sequence of events. This theological narrative has as its starting point the New Testament with an understanding of direct lineage from apostolic times, what he calls a “Cloud of Witnesses”. Younan’s reading not only of history but also of scripture shows an attempt to relate this to contemporary events. The roots of Palestinian identity for him stretch back to the Canaanites and Philistines who arrived in the Land prior to New Testament times:

> We see our roots going back also to the Canaanites and the Philistines (originally from Crete) who inhabited the land before the arrival of the Israelites under Joshua. It would be simplistic to expect their disappearance from the scene with the establishment of the Israelite monarchy. As is usually the case, indigenous people make efforts to preserve their heritage when dominated by a conquering nation.[255]

[255] Younan, op. cit, p. 5.

Laying aside any challenge as to the historical or archaeological evidence of this claim, it is noteworthy that this ancient narrative is told through the prism of the contemporary experience of Palestinian Christians, which is a recurring theme when Younan turns to post-Biblical and post-Apostolic times. Given what we have already established about geographical nomenclature, Younan attempts to lay claim to an "authentically Christian" reading of the word "Palestine" and "Palestinian" that is rooted in a Christian Palestinian reading of the Old Testament.

Younan offers a reading of Christian presence in the Holy Land through Apostolic times and when he turns to the period of Islamic ascendancy he stresses Christians, on balance, fared reasonably well under Islamic rule. Referring to the system of *Ahl al-Dhimmi* (protected status for Jews and Christians in return for the payment of the *jizyah* tax), Younan states this allowed Christians to participate to a significant degree in society, and instances various ways in which Arab Christians were able to contribute to economic and governmental matters in different parts of the Arab world including Egypt and Iraq.[256] However, Younan does not discuss the negative impact upon Christian communities of Dhimmitude.[257]

Whilst Younan acknowledges that there were examples of persecution by Islamic rulers, particularly the Mamluks (1293–1354) and Caliph al-Hakim (996–1021), his overall point is that Christianity generally was tolerated under

[256] See further, C. E. Bosworth, "The Concept of Dhimma in Early Islam", *Living Stones Yearbook 2012*, Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust 2012, p. 143–164; Sidney H. Griffith, "Arabic Christian Relations with Islam: Retrieving from History, Expanding the Canon", in A. O'Mahony and J. Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, pp. 263–290.

[257] For an in-depth treatment of the impact upon non-Muslims of Dhimmitude, see Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Dhimmitude*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Islamic rule, in contrast to Byzantine (Christian) rule where Greek culture and language were imposed.[258]

A similar reading of history is found in the writings of Mitri Raheb. He speaks of the imposition of Greek orthodoxy upon the original Oriental Orthodox churches, that grew accustomed to reading the Bible in allegorical and typological means that divorced Christianity from its connectedness to the Land.[259]

It is a recurring theme in Raheb's writings whereby Arab Christianity is defined in terms of its differentiation from other Christian traditions, Western and also Eastern, and its closeness to Arab Islam. This is again a question as to whether this strand of Palestinian Christian writing belongs at all within the Eastern Christian tradition given that this comment suggests an anti-Eastern Christian narrative.[260]

The theme of the non-Arab Christian outsider being more problematic to Arab Christianity than Islam is further referenced when Younan turns to the Crusader period. Here he makes two points. The first (a point often made by other commentators) the perceived enemy of the Crusaders was not Islam per se but all things Eastern. He points out that the Greek Patriarch in Constantinople was deposed, and the Christian village of Beit Jala was annihilated. His second point is that whilst the victory of Salah al-Din over the Crusaders is widely perceived as a "Muslim victory", Christians too fought on

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[258] Younan, op. cit, p. 8f.

[259] Mitri Raheb, "Towards a New Hermeneutics of Liberation: A Palestinian Christian Perspective", in Raheb (ed), *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation: Towards a new hermeneutics of liberation*, Bethlehem: Diyar Publisher, 2012, pp. 24f.

[260] See also A. O'Mahony, "Palestinian-Arab Orthodox Christians: Religion, Politics and Church-State Relations in Jerusalem, c. 1900–1925", *Chronos*, no. 3, 2000, pp. 61–91.

his side with two of the leading generals of Salah al-Din being Christian.[261] For Raheb, the period of Muslim rule, characterized by many Christians converting to Islam in order to avoid paying the *jizya* tax, was due in part to the Greek Christian tradition's divorcing scripture from the Land.[262] Ironically, the Crusaders represents a Christian imagination that had rejected mere allegorization of the Land!

The next important period for Younan's chronology is the Ottoman Empire which he notes saw a decline in the Christian population of the Holy Land whilst at the same time, during the 19th century, the Ottomans' ceding limited jurisdiction to Western colonial powers of the Holy Land which paved the way for Western missionaries to gain a foothold. The result of this missionary activity, Younan points out, was an increase in the overall Christian population.

The promise of emancipation from Ottoman rule from the British is for Younan a critical aspect of the history of the Holy Land, which, as he says, "a century of European intervention and Palestinian devastation followed, first with the establishment of the British Mandate in 1918 and then with the state of Israel in 1948."[263]

However, Younan also notes that during this period there was both an "Arabisation" of the churches of the Holy Land and the rise of Pan-Arab nationalism in which Christians played a significant part in developing. Thus, Christians have been active in their support of the Ba'ath Parties of Iraq and

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[261] Younan, op. cit., p. 11.
[262] Raheb, *The Biblical Text in the Context of* Occupation, p. 25.
[263] Ibid., p. 15.

Syria, and within the Palestine Liberation Organization. The radical Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was even founded by an Eastern Orthodox Christian, George Habash (1926–2008).

Younan then concludes his overall narrative by commenting on the creation of the State of Israel and the political situation up to and including 1948. In common with other Palestinian writers, Younan categorically describes this as a catastrophe—*al-Nakba*—and comments on what he sees as the resulting injustice, most notably in terms of land confiscation. One aspect of this was that the Christian community of the Holy Land became a "refugee Church", which is as much a personal story as that of a people and a church, and Younan himself is emphatic—even proud—to describe himself as a bishop who is also a refugee.[264]

Understanding Palestinian history as one lived under colonial rule is another significant feature of Palestinian writing. Naim Stifan Ateek (a former Canon of St. George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem), whilst acknowledging the effects of European antisemitism and the failure of Jewish attempts at assimilation upon the development of Zionism, nonetheless sees Zionism as inspired by European colonialism, rather than as a nationalist movement:

> The Zionist movement found inspiration in the spirit of nineteenth century European colonialism, which had not yet fully showed (sic) its exploitative character. Most Europeans still viewed it in a positive light, as bringing civilization and culture to backward peoples. For Herzl,

[264] Ibid., p. 23–26.

> Palestine was to be “part of the rampart of Europe against Asia” that “would serve as an outpost of culture against barbarism”.[265]

Mitri Raheb also understands Palestinian history in terms of living under a series of different (what he describes as) imperialisms. The history of the Palestinian people is one lived under the rule of various empires, including Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, British and Israeli (the latter clearly defined in imperial terms).[266] The various historical accounts of the final years of the British Mandate reveal a reluctance on the part of the British to let go of their power and influence in Palestine. Churchill was to express his dismay that Attlee was willing to grant independence to India whilst retaining British rule of Palestine.[267]

When it comes to Israel, however, Raheb comments that Israel has exceeded past empires in the use of the building of settlements as a means of control both in terms of the scale of building but also in terms of their location on higher ground.[268] However he offers a particular analysis of this historical dynamic. He identifies three developments that contributed to the loss of “historical and continuous memory”. The first occurred under Byzantine rule when “an imperial church” could not recognize the anti-imperial aspects of the Biblical narrative. The second is Islamicization “where the tie to Biblical memory was lost and replaced with another that was severed from the geography of Palestine. Neither the Bible nor Palestine was crucial any

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[265] Naim Stiifan Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll: Orbis 1989, p. 22.
[266] Mitri Raheb, *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible Though Palestinian Eyes*, p. 10f.
[267] Michael Makovsky, *Churchill's Promised Land: Zionism and Statecraft*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press 2007, pp. 238ff.
[268] Raheb, *Faith in the Face of Empire*, p. 58f.

longer." This comment is striking when laid alongside other Palestinian writers as it represents a rare statement on the negative impact of Islamic rule. Finally, the Jewish migration to Palestine in the late 19th and early 20th centuries contributes to this loss of historical and Biblical memory. In this case the "loss" is precipitated by the perception of divine legitimization for those who have colonized the land. [269]

Throughout his writings he underlines the point that Palestine has almost always been occupied by other foreign powers and asks when they will have their own State. The importance of this question for Raheb lies in the desire that "liberation" is not the end in itself. He refers back to the Hebrew Scriptures by quoting the desire of the Jews to be "a nation like others" (cf.1 Samuel 8.20). So, echoing the desire of liberation and nationhood that is so evident in the formation of Zionism, Raheb too expressing Palestinian desire for self-determination in a language that, perhaps, might be understood and comprehended within Judaism. [270]

Nevertheless, he expresses Palestinian frustration and the lack of any progress in the matter. He suggests however the pursuit of statehood might in the end be the wrong goal for both Israelis and Palestinians as it has not delivered peaceful co-existence:

> A state might thus be important, but statehood would not change much in terms of geo-politics and power balance. This is why the states that emerged in Palestine over the centuries resembled little more than areas of self-rule in the shadow of empire … If Israelis and Palestinians

[269] Raheb, op, cit., p. 15.
[270] Raheb, *Faith in the Face of Empire*, p. 82f.

> are frank with themselves, they need to admit that the state project they respectively worked so hard to achieve for the last sixty or so years has failed. Israel developed an apartheid system, and the Palestinian mini-state in Gaza or the Palestinian "holes in the cheese" of the West Bank are not the dream for which people fought. Yet both peoples are still unable and/or unwilling to admit that hard and painful truth and begin looking for new models of coexistence.[271]

Raheb rejects the notion that history can be viewed in this way, and he, along with other Palestinian writers such as Ateek and Younan, sees recurring patterns of colonization, subjugation, broken promises and loss of collective memory. Thus, there is a sense of imperial recapitulation with the Palestinian people being diminished each time the pattern recurs. In this respect the approach to Christian history that Raheb and others take, might be said to resemble an atemporal understanding, such as is found in Islamic thinking, or at the very least a pre-Renaissance view of time.

In the context of the most recent period of Palestinian history (since 1948) Raheb suggests that the recasting of Western Christian theology in a way that dispenses with replacement theology regarding Judaism has in turn created a new-replacement theology whereby the Palestinian people are replaced by Israel:

> In the same moment when (Western) theologians were countering a kind of "replacement theology", a theology that understands the Christian Church to have replaced Israel, they fall into another trap of

[271] Ibid., p. 83f.

> “replacement theology”, a theology that replaces the Palestinians by the Jewish people and looks at the land being connected only to one people, that is the Jews, and not to those who remained there centuries and might have more Jewish roots than most of those “imported” merely for demographic reasons … This “replacement theology” provided a “theological cover” for an ongoing racial replacement policy of the State of Israel.[272]

It has already been noted that much of Palestinian liberation theology is written with a Western audience in mind. This is something that has been taken up by John S.Munayer and Samuel S.Munayer who seeks to build on the work of Palestinian theologians, in particular Ateek and Raheb. They observe that both theologians are influenced by Western methodologies and write for Western audiences which fails to address the intersectionality of Palestinian oppression which includes matters of class and gender as well as the main dividing lines of the Israel Palestine conflict. They suggest two alternative foundations of Palestinian Liberation Theology (PLT) that of Middle Eastern Orthodox traditions and practises and Palestinian national consciousness and resistance. However, they also note that Palestinian liberation theology’s appeal to Western audiences is logical given the enormous power of Western theology to influence policy making:

> nevertheless, this attempt to convince Christians abroad has produced a PLT that is developed for white Western

[272] Mitri Raheb. “Shaping Communities in times of Crises: Narratives of Land, people and Identities”, www. mitriraheb.org.

> intelligentsia, which for the most part is grounded in structures of coloniality. the mere appeal to a Eurocentric audience first indicates the power struggle at play: Those suffering from coloniality aim to convince the powerful and privileged in 'the empire' to change.

The result is a distancing between Palestine liberation theology and the Palestinian people and their context. Munayer hold that Palestinian Protestants - who are for the most part the descendants of converts from orthodoxy - can sometimes be seen as practising traditions other than their own whilst at the same time there is great fluidity and complexity were those of Protestant affiliation maintained ritual contact with Orthodox churches.

By contrast PLT can also draw all the indigenous Palestinian Orthodox practise and traditions. Munayer identifies "motifs of liberation and justice" within the Orthodox tradition and a particular example they offer is the figure of Saint George who is the patron Saint of Palestine. George is offered as an abiding image of the Christian of courage who struggles against adversity with the memorable icon and image of the saint who slays the dragon - many churches in the region are dedicated to Saint George and his icons can be found in many Palestinian homes. Saints are important in the Orthodox tradition as they reflect the image of God in the way they live their lives - thus to struggle against adversity and to slay "powerful Dragons" is to reflect strongly the image of God who struggles with his people. George is also an important figure with some Palestinian Muslims through the figure of Al Khadr

who also struggles against 1000 demons.[273] Munayer points to some aspects of Christian Muslim shared practise in the Church of Lydda and surrounding monasteries with some Muslims praying at these places and indeed the relics of Saint George are believed to lay at the church of Lydda.

Thus, the Palestinian orthodox tradition contains within it motifs of liberation and justice that can be the basis of a Palestinian theology that is truly contextual and can speak into the context of occupation and oppression. However, it might be observed that this approach has an individualistic flavour to it and so Munayer also seek to draw on Palestinian national consciousness and resistance as a second aspect overdeveloping Palestinian contextual theology. This emphasise is the importance of recognising guard at work in the unfolding of Palestinian history and there are two important themes here, *Sumud* and *Intifada. Sumud* - steadfastness or resolve, which can be "resistance" or just mere survival or maintaining and preserving a way of life against all odds even the very act of remaining in the land is an important expression of this quality embodied by Christ as the steadfast one on the road to Calvary. Intifada is a more familiar term although to western readership it might evoke images of violent protest however Intifada is a more complex idea that describes actions that are forcefully shaking off and resist normalisation of the occupation.[274]

But the theological roots of any indigenous theology must inevitably turn on the question hermeneutics and how religious faith amidst occupation and struggle is informed by a reading of the Bible, and to this theme we next turn.

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[273] John S. Munayer and Samuel S. Munayer: "Decolonising Palestinian Liberation Theology: New Methods, Sources and Voices" Studies in World Christianity 28.3 (2022): 287–310

[274] See: John S. Munayer and Samuel S. Munayer, op.cit.

3.7 Displacement Theopolitics and Hermeneutics of the Land

Not withstanding the detailed critique of Zionism (Jewish and Christian) that Palestinian theologians offer, how much is this reflective of a deeper theological consideration? Atalia Omer has critiqued some aspects of Palestinian liberation theology (PLT) thus:

> A PLT challenges the hermeneutics of an Israeli discourse of nationalism (and its amplification by Christian Zionists) while obscuring the urgency of engaging in a hermeneutics of a Palestinian national identity. The deployment of a liberal-secularist political vision for the future Palestinian state amounts to framing "religion" as a private and interiorized matter of "conscience", enabled within a broader cultural Palestinian landscape.

She suggests that this is now challenged by a global resurgence of religion.[275]

This observation is critical to the next stage of thinking from Palestinian theological thought, particularly from Raheb. Critical to Raheb's point is the way in which Israel represents a radical displacement of Palestinian identity.

Central to Palestinian Christian writings on the land is a lament concerning Western Christianity's apparent failure to recognize an indigenous Palestinian Christianity. Many writers tell of numerous conversations with Western Christians where this ignorance is laid bare. The invisibility of Palestinian Christianity is perpetuated by two phenomena: the perception that "Arab" is synonymous with "Muslim", and the name of the Jewish State being Israel,

[275] Atalia Omer, "The Cry of the Forgotten Stones: The Promise and Limits of a Palestinian Liberation Theology as a Method for Peacebuilding", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 43.2: 369–407, 2015.

thus placing it in direct historical lineage with the Israel of Biblical times. Thus, Palestinian Christianity becomes the victim of what Raheb calls “displacement theopolitics”.

The assertion that the Jewish people are in direct succession to the Jews of Biblical Israel is enshrined in the “the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel”, on May 14th 1948, the day after the ending of the British Mandate:

> ERETZ-ISRAEL [(Hebrew)—the Land of Israel, Palestine was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

There claims therefore of direct continuity with Biblical peoples is one made by both Palestinians and Israelis. For Raheb and other Palestinian writers, however, their own continuity is largely invisible to the world and along with the creation of Israel as a Jewish State that reconnects with its Biblical past, creates a new “replacement theology”—that of Israel as a replacement of Palestine.

Raheb Also observes that's the use of Biblical language in relation to Israel increased after the Six Day War of 1967. He points out that even the name of that war has Biblical connotations:

> The victory was branded by many as little “David”—meaning the state of Israel—defeating the monster “Goliath”—meaning the Arab World. Moreover, the conquest of East Jerusalem became the theme of the

> song “Jerusalem, City of Gold”, which became the hit of the year 1967 perpetuating the image of two thousand years of longing for the city. In this song we also see the myth of Israel as coming back to a barren land, to dry fountains, and to the temple mountain.

Raheb also connects the 1967 war to an increase in Jewish Messianism which would herald the building of settlements on the West Bank, usurping Palestinians from their land, which is a major obstacle in agreeing a Two State Solution, the aspiration of the Oslo Accords and all subsequent attempts at a peaceful solution by the international community.[276]

Palestinian responses to this have involved a challenge to the claims of Jewish continuity. The questioning of claims of historical and genetic descent from the Jews that occupied land prior to 70 CE is particularly espoused by the work of Israeli history Schlomo Sand who has maintained that no such link can be proven.[277] Raheb makes use of this approach. However, his intention in raising this is not to delegitimize the authenticity of Jewish ethnic and religious identity, but to underline his point that Palestinian Christians—as part of the indigenous population of the Levant—are repeatedly displaced by the effects of contemporary geopolitics. He notes for example that in early Zionist writing Palestinians were regarded as ethnically closer to European Jews than any other peoples.[278]

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[276] Mitri Raheb, “Displacement Theopolitics: A Century of Interplay between Theology and Politics in Palestine”, in M. Raheb (ed.) *The Invention of History: A Century of Interplay between Theology and Politics in Palestine*, Bethlehem: Diyar Publisher, 2011, pp. 9–32.
[277] Schlomo Sand (b. 1946) is an Israeli historian known for his criticism of Zionism and its effects on Palestinians. He has often described himself as “Post-Zionist”. His most notable works: The Invention of the Jewish People and the Invention of the Land of Israel.
[278] Mitri Raheb, “Displacement Theopolitics”, p. 15ff.

The origins of the displacement are traced to the 19th century Christian Zionism that led to the Balfour Declaration and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel. The Balfour Declaration had stated the desire for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people … it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

The hopes of creating a bi-national State (expressed by Martin Buber and others) were soon overwhelmed by historical circumstances:

> Zionism was able to utilize the Christian-created "displacement theology" and to translate it into a "real political" agenda with the aim of displacing the Palestinians, depriving the native peasants their land, and occupying the flourishing Palestinian cities to give them to Jewish immigrants.[279]

The fullest scale of this displacement was precipitated by the "final solution" of Nazis, which provided the Jews of Europe with little or no option but to seek self-determination in Palestine. Yet the consequence of this was, as Raheb puts it, that "the Palestinians had to pay for the sins of Europe against the Jews."

The second feature of this "displacement" was the chosen name of the new Jewish State: Israel. This created a hermeneutical crisis for Palestinian Christians in a way that it didn't for Muslims. Raheb points to the name of the

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[279] Ibid., pp. 17f. The claim that the displacement of the Palestinians was part of the agenda of Zionism from the beginning is a consistent theme in anti-Zionist discourse and is a substantial part of Michael Prior's critique of Zionism. See for example: Michael Prior, *Zionism and the State of Israel: A Moral Inquiry*, London: Routledge, 1999.

ship— “The Exodus”—that brought Jews from Europe to Palestine in 1947 as one example amongst many that helped to create a sense of Biblical continuity for Zionism. It sealed a hermeneutical paradigm for Jewish Israelis but created a hermeneutical crisis for Palestinians Christians. It was as though they had been displaced from the Land by their own scriptures.

The full force of this is not only felt within the Palestinian context. Arnold J. Toynbee described how this is played out in its liturgical context:

> Today, if I go to church and try to join in the singing of the Psalms, I am pulled up short, with a jar, when the name “Israel” comes on to my lips. The name conjures up today a picture of a small, middle-European type state, with bickering political parties like all such states, with a rigid—and unsuccessful—foreign policy with respect to its neighbours and with constant appeal to the Jews of the world to send them money or to come themselves. This picture has now effaced that one in our minds. It has effaced it, whoever we are: Jews or Christians, diaspora Jews or Israelis, believers or agnostics. The present-day picture Israel has, for all of us, obliterated or, at least, adumbrated, the spiritual Israel of the Judeo-Christian tradition. This is surely a tragedy.[280]

These remarks from Toynbee reveal a fundamental issue at the heart of the quest for a theology of the land, namely that concepts such as “Israel”, “Jerusalem” and “Zion” (even Palestine, as Krämer observes) have a spiritual and atemporal association within Western Christian theology and only

[280] Elmer Berger, *Prophecy, Zionism and the State of Israel*, introduced by Arnold J. Toynbee, quoted in Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice and only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989, p. 76.

become subject to re-examination with the emergence of the State of Israel as a political and temporal reality that compels Christian theology to re-examine its relationship to the Land. The “atemporal” nature of Christian theology of Zion is most apparent in devotional texts, hymnody and Christian Psalm adaptions.[281] Two examples illustrate this. The first is the hymn “Urbs sion aurea” by Bernard of Morlaix (1146), translated into English by John M. Neale in 1858:

> Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest,
>
> Beneath thy contemplation sink heart and voice oppressed.
>
> I know not, O I know not, what joys await us there,
>
> What radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare.
>
> They stand, those halls of Zion, all jubilant with song,
>
> And bright with many an angel, and all the martyr throng;
>
> The Prince is ever in them, the daylight is serene.
>
> The pastures of the blessèd are decked in glorious sheen.[282]

The second is the 19th century devotional song, with words by Frederick E. Wetherly, “The Holy City”. It relates the dream of standing in Biblical

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[281] Although there are various points in history where the Holy Land and particular Jerusalem have temporal significance for Western Christianity: the Crusades in one example, but so too is growing evangelical interest in Jerusalem, its ancient holy places, and the desire to displace these with new “authentic” sites “discovered” by the new science of archaeology. See, for example, Sarah Kochav. “The Search for a Protestant Holy Sepulchre: The Garden Tomb in Nineteenth Century Jerusalem”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 46, No. 2, April 1995, Cambridge University Press, pp. 278–301.

[282] The text of this hymn can be found in numerous hymns, for instance *Congregational Praise*, Independent Press 1951, Hymn No.352, p.384

Jerusalem, with the Palm Sunday cries of Hosanna and the “shadow of the cross” and culminates in a vision of an eschatological Jerusalem:

> And once again the scene was changed,
> New earth there seemed to be.
> I saw the Holy City
> Beside the tideless sea.
> The light of God was on its streets,
> The gates were open wide,
> And all who would might enter,
> And no one was denied.
> No need of moon or stars by night,
> Or sun to shine by day;
> It was the new Jerusalem
> That would not pass away.[283]

There are countless other examples. What is evident from these illustrations is how the atemporal importance of Jerusalem (and by implication, the Holy Land) has been a dominant and over-arching theme of Christian theology and devotion especially in post-Reformation Europe. Any sense of Jerusalem's temporal nature ends with Biblical times and the Church looks beyond history to the eschatological images that are described in the Book of Revelation 21, from which the two examples given, draw upon. This may well be the consequence of Christianity moving from being a Jewish sect to a new faith dominated by Gentiles; as Simon Sebag Montefiore observes:

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[283] Stephen Adams and Frederick Wetherly, *The Holy City (Sheet Music),* London: Boosey and Hawkes 1982, 2002

> Yet the growing number of Gentile Christians around the Mediterranean no longer revered the real Jerusalem. The defeat of the Jews separated them for ever from the mother-religion, proving the truth of Jesus' prophecies and the succession of a new revelation. Jerusalem was just the wilderness of a failed faith. The Book of Revelation replaced the Temple with Christ the Lamb. At the End of Days, golden, bejewelled Jerusalem would descend from heaven.[284]

Indeed, Christianity's ultimate break with Judaism, precipitated in part with the destruction of Jerusalem (and in particular the Temple) by the Romans in 70 CE, seems to have been a critical factor in the Land being view merely in atemporal and eschatological terms.[285] John T. Pawlikowski notes how this was driven by the needs to replace the Jewish exclusiveness with regard to the land with an eschatological Zion, and that to some extent the Christian language of "Holy Land" is part of the same tendency.[286]

Zionism, and particularly the creation of the State of Israel, raises a significant challenge to Western Christian theology, as Toynbee illustrates. Having viewed Judaism as a faith tradition that had been superseded by Christianity, the temporal significance of Jerusalem had all but evaporated, and reduced to eschatological hope. But this lack of temporal significance is critical within a faith that is manifested in time in the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is in this context that Christian Zionism becomes significant. Rooted in the same period

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[284] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Jerusalem: The Biography*, London, 2011, p. 159.
[285] The events of 70CE, and the war that led up to the defeat of Judaism, is not without significance in the narrative of the Land: the creation of Israel is often seen in terms of a reversal of centuries of exile from the Land and the antisemitism that followed it. What flows from this is the debate over whether the Jews of present-day Israel have any continuity with the Jews pre-70CE.
[286] John T. Pawlikowski. "Ethics in a Globalized World: Implications for the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", *PEACE and CHANGE*, Vol. 36, No. 4, October 2011, pp. 541–556.

as the growth in the popularity of Christian devotional literature that is characterized by the eschatological vision of the New Jerusalem, it sought to precipitate the early advent of the new Jerusalem through the return of Jews to the Holy Land. Yet it did not foresee the potential theological challenge that realized Zionism would create for Christian theology: that the Jews "stepping into history" suggests an ontological crisis for Christian self understanding, that a faith that it believed had been superseded had re-entered history, self-defined in Biblical and Davidic terms (albeit with a strong secular underpinning). These challenges are both hermeneutical and ecclesial. Hermeneutical, in that the methodology of scriptural interpretation are critical here, and ecclesial because so much ecclesiology is predicated upon the Church (the Body of Christ) as "the New Israel". Thus, one can posit that the existence of the State of Israel is a significant hermeneutical and ecclesiological challenge to Christian theology more generally, but a theology of the land more specifically. It might also suggest something deeper and more profound about the power dynamic within the Jewish-Christian encounter that comes to the surface when we examine theologies of Palestinian displacement: theological ideas of replacement and of the church as the "new Israel" reflect the overwhelming power dynamic at the very heart of the Jewish-Christian encounter in Europe which is brought into sharper focus when we examine the power relationship between Palestinians and the State of Israel. Therefore, in the context of the Holy Land the Jewish-Christian encounter is one that can be described as a reversed power dynamic.

How do these theological contours compare and contrast with those in Judaism and Islam? Jerusalem has been imbedded in the memory and

imagination of Judaism. It is the place that is remembered for its Biblical centrality and is also a place of yearning. However, its embeddedness is none the less expressed in overt temporal terms. The words at the end of the Sedar meal “next year in Jerusalem” locate the city in time and took on particular significance for Jews in the diaspora, especially in the centuries between 70 CE and 1948. Judaism never quite lost the sense of Jerusalem as having a temporal reality. This we find expressed in the words from the Sephardic tradition in the 11th/12th century:

> Beautiful city, delight of the world, city of the great king!
>
> My soul yearns for you from the far-off west!
>
> It saddens my heart to remember what you were before,
>
> Your exiled glory and the destruction of your temple.
>
> If only I could fly to you on the wings of eagles,
>
> My tears would soak your soil and mingle with it!
>
> I seek you though you have no king; and though where once
>
> There was balm in Gilead, there are now only vipers and scorpions.
>
> How can I not be moved by your stones and kiss them,
>
> When the taste of your earth on my lips is sweeter than honey!
>
> (“Zionida: Yefe Nof” by Judah Ha-Levy 1075–1141)[287]

[287] “Zionida: Yefe Nof” (Beautiful city: delighted of the world), quoted in Montserrat Figueras and Jordi Savall, “A Homage to Jerusalem and an Invocation to Peace”, Alle Vox. 2008 (accompanying notes and texts to audio CDs).

For Islam, Jerusalem had been the original *Qiblah* (orientation for prayer), perhaps in the hope of persuading Jews to embrace Islam, only for this to be changed to Mecca.

The importance of Jerusalem is outlined by Muslim scholar Ghada Talhami:

> There are other holy cities in Islam, but Jerusalem holds a special place in the hearts and minds of Muslims because its fate has always been intertwined with theirs. Unlike the other two holiest places of Islam, Mecca and Medina, Jerusalem had always tested the Muslims' commitment to the universalist and monotheistic aspects of their faith. Singled out from the dawn of Islam as a holy centre by no less than the Prophet Muhammad himself, Jerusalem was fated never to be exclusively Muslim. Yet, Jerusalem's centrality to all three monotheistic faiths was known to Muhammad from the start. There is evidence to suggest that he chose it as an anchor of the faith precisely because of what it meant to the People of the Book. Had there been no Islamic heritage in Jerusalem, Muslims would have never known the challenge, the agony, and the magnanimity of religious accommodation and tolerance. Had there been no Jerusalem in the universe of Islam, Muslims might never have known the passion and glory of defending their most hallowed sanctuaries and grounds, only to lose control of them century after century. It is always Jerusalem which forces

> Muslims to test their commitment to the faith, as well as their willingness to defend it.[288]

These hermeneutical challenges posed by scripture and their geo-political implications have had a convulsive impact on Palestinian Christians and the way their faith is practiced, leading to a reluctance in reading from the Old Testament. The former Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah[289] was one of the first writers to identify a problem that exists within Old Testament hermeneutics in the Palestinian context, whereby difficulties with particular texts that refer to Israel could lead towards a new Marcionism, the early Christian dualist belief that rejected the Old Testament and the God of Israel, denounced by Tertullian as a heresy in 208 CE. As such most Palestinian theologians veered away from such a hermeneutical direction and sought new ways of engaging with the language of the Old Testament in light of contemporary events.[290] Munther Isaac, a Palestinian theologian (also of Lutheran background), believes this new Marcionism has become part of Palestinian Christian belief and practice.[291] This he sees through a liberation

[288] Ghada Talhami, speaking at a 1993 colloquium organized by the World Council of Churches, quoted in Clare Amos, *Peace-ing Together Jerusalem*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014, pp. 48ff. See further Cragg, *The Excellences of the Jerusalem*, London: Altajir World of Islam Trust, 1999. See also Bård Maeland: “The plural significance of Jerusalem—*Kenneth Cragg’s theological vision* ex infra”, *Studia Theologica* 61 (2007), pp. 140–162; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh: “Jerusalem and Mecca”, in Lee I. Levine (ed), *Jerusalem: Its sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New York: Continuum, 1999, pp. 287–299.

[289] Michael Sabbah (b. 1933) was the first Palestinian to become the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem (1987–2008). Born in Nazareth during the rule of the British Mandate he has played a critical role in the development of Palestinian Christian thinking through his pastoral letters and other such writings.

[290] Michel Sabbah: “Reading the Bible Today in the Land of the Bible”, in Drew Christiansen SJ and Saliba Sarsar (eds), *Faithful Witness: On Reconciliation and Peace in the Holy Land*, New York: New York City Press, 2009, pp. 23–60.

[291] Isaac’s approach to a theology of the land is through the discipline of Biblical studies, whereby Biblical history (Old and New Testaments) are read as pointing to a missional theology of the land that “universalized in Christ” the promises concerning the land. See *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth*, Carlisle CA: Langham Monographs, 2015.

theology approach and also through a spiritualizing of Biblical texts. He also notes that this is a tendency that is being followed by Arab theologians in other parts of the Middle East, reflecting how central and emotionally charged the Israel-Palestine conflict has become. Furthermore, it is illustrative just how theologically and spiritually disruptive the theological dimension to Zionist language is to Palestinian Christianity.

Mitri Raheb meanwhile, seeks to bring together scripture and lived experience in his contribution to the debate about hermeneutics, identifying "land" and the "people" as critical aspects alongside scripture itself. Not only are they the context out of which the Scripture is read, but he elevates them to what he calls the "Fifth" and "Sixth" Gospels respectively. Raheb's theme which he has developed elsewhere, namely that of the Palestinian people who lived in the "shade of empire" plays a critical role in his hermeneutics. The land of Palestine, he states, is a land which has been almost continuously occupied by external forces and empires, yet the Bible was revealed to the native people of the land. Only during brief periods of history were the people of the land free from this foreign domination and in respect of this the period of Davidic rule is seen as one such period where the people of the land were truly free. Thus, the theme of liberation in relation to the land is critical for Raheb, so much so that he sees the Land "being like a fifth gospel": liberation and salvation being Biblical and contemporary issues.[292]

Raheb then turns to the question of who the "native peoples of land" are. The hermeneutical challenge here is that for many readers of the Bible—especially

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[292] Mitri Raheb. "Towards a New Hermeneutics of Liberation: A Palestinian Christian Perspective", in Raheb (ed), *The Biblical Text in the Context of* Occupation, pp. 11–15.

those he identifies as Christian Zionist—the natives of the Land are in fact "the Israelis of today":

> These groups shift from 70 AD to 1948 as if history was standing still for 20 centuries. They equate the Israelites of the Bible with the Israelis of today as if it were so obvious, and as if the Land of Palestine was just laying here "without a people" waiting to be inhabited "again" by "a people without a land". This is nothing but a European and a Christian Zionist myth. Behind such an understanding is definitely a static understanding of history and a naïve fundamentalist approach.[293]

The Jews who emigrated to Palestine in the 20th century were not, he suggests, descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine but have their origins amongst the Berbers of North Africa or the Khazars of the area around Southern Russia who moved to Eastern Europe. Thus, he disputes the connection between the Jews of the Bible and the Jews who make up the bulk of Israeli society. This is not an assertion made in isolation. Within the Israeli and the Jewish diaspora there is an ongoing debate about the ethnic origins of the Jewish people, for example, between Harry Ostrer and Scholmo Sand. Ostrer, a geneticist, declared in 2010 that he had identified Jewish origins which lay in the Middle East, a claim strongly criticized by Sand who resisted the notion that a "Jewish gene" could be found or that doing so was desirable. The point is further developed in Sand's book *The Invention of the Jewish People*, where Sand asserts that the original Ashkenazi Jews lay with the Khazars, a nomadic people of Turkic ethnicity, some of who are believed

[293] Ibid., pp. 16ff.

to have converted to Judaism.[294] Sand seeks to re-frame the discourse around Jewish identity away from a single ethno-religious entity, toward a major religious culture (in that sense resembling Christianity and Islam):

> A deeper exploration of the way of life and communication in past Jewish communities might further expose a wicked little fact: that the further we move from religious norms and the more we focus our research on diverse daily practices, the more we discover that there never was a secular ethnographic common denominator between Jewish believers in Asia, Africa and Europe. World Jewry had always been a major religious culture. Though consisting of various elements, it was not a strange, wandering nation.[295]

This perspective, taken seriously by Raheb and other Palestinian writers, is of particular significance in the numerous aspects that we have so far discussed. It has relevance to “identity”: if a Jewish State represents a major religious culture how do Christians and Muslims belong to such a society? It has relevance to the hermeneutical questions: is there space for a plurality of readings, not just within a religion, but between two religions who share scripture, and another whose scripture is claimed to be corrective? Furthermore, how does a nation defined in religious terms, where many of its citizens have the origins and roots elsewhere, relate to those who have greater longevity in the Land?

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[294] Geneticist Eran Elhaik makes a similar case in his 2012 research paper, "The Missing Link of Jewish European Ancestry: Contrasting the Rhineland and the Khazarian Hypotheses" http://gbe. oxfordjournals. org/content/early/2012/12/14/gbe. evs119. full. pdf+html [accessed 13/10/2015].
[295] Schlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, New York: Verso, 2009, 248f.

This last question is of particular significance for Raheb who sees the Palestinian experience as one that has been displaced. He notes that the indigenous peoples of the region had never left the land with only a small portion of them ever being exiled (for example during the Assyrian period),

> Their identity, however, kept changing and developing according to the new realities and empires they were facing, they changed their language from Aramaic to Greek to Arabic; their identity kept shifting from Canaanite to Judaic/Israelite, to Hasmonaic, to Roman, to Byzantine, to Arab, to Ottoman, and to Palestinian, to name few. They changed their religion from Baal, to Jahwe. Later they believed in Jesus Christ and became Christians. When the first Aramaic-speaking monophysites, they were forced to become Greek Orthodox. Forced to pay extra taxes, their joined Islam and became Muslims. And yet they stayed throughout the centuries and remained the same group of people with a dynamic identity. In this sense, the Palestinians of today stand in historic continuity with Biblical Israel.

As such, this Palestinian people, that exists in direct continuity with the Israelites of Biblical times, also represents a “sixth Gospel”, and represent an important hermeneutical key to the Bible, and he urges a listening to this people of the land—Muslims and Palestinian Jews, as well as Christians.[296]

A further hermeneutical concern raised by Raheb is one related to Palestinian Arab identity. Much has already been noted on the close relationship between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East. A strong factor in this is the

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[296] Raheb, in *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation*, p. 17.

common language of Arabic and Arabic culture. Just as Israel presents a hermeneutical challenge in its use of Biblical nomenclature, so too does language. The Old Testament is a Hebrew text, whilst the Qur'an is Arabic. Muhammad's original intention to be a prophet for the Arabs and to unify Arab peoples through a single religion presents a significant, if often understated, ontological challenge for Arab Christians: how to relate to the pre-eminent Arabic text? Raheb speaks to this important question. He notes that Arab Christians belong to two world—the universal church and the Arab nation, and that Arabic is the "shared space" between Islam and Christianity.[297] Noting that in the Divine Liturgy Christians encounter God in Christ, and that the Qur'an is the point of divine-human encounter, he is able to dismiss what he calls Western Christian objections that because God is revealed through the written word in Islam, that renders God distant and remote from human experience. Thus, he can argue that Eastern Christianity has a different relationship with Islam because of its understanding of scripture as liturgy. Furthermore, just as the Qur'an can only be apprehended in Arabic so too can the Eastern Liturgy only be truly offered up in its appropriate liturgical language:

> The suras belonging to the Mecca periods of Muhammad's preaching were not yet understood as constituting new scripture, independent of the scriptures of the Jews and Christians. We have argued that they should be understood, rather, as a form of liturgical contextualization of

[297] Mitri Raheb, "Contextualizing the Scripture: Towards a New Understanding of the Qur'an—An Arab Christian Perspective", in *Studies in World Christianity*, Volume 3, Issue 2, October 1997, pp. 180–201; see also Leonard Marsh, "Whose Holy Land?", in *Studies in World Christianity*, Volume 15, Issue 3, December 2009, pp.276-286

> God's work, parallel to the Jewish and Christian liturgies with which Muhammad would have been familiar.[298]

To make this point Raheb relies on the Meccan suras which are generally viewed as being more conciliatory towards the People of the Book.[299] But what are Raheb's reflections when he turns to the later Medinan suras? Here we find Raheb placing emphasis upon Muhammad's disputations with the Jewish tribes that he encountered there.[300] The portrayal of Jews as "exclusivist" and deniers of Arab validity is emphasized by Raheb:

> It is certainly not very difficult to imagine (the Medinan Jews), considering themselves to be the 'chosen people', proudly paraded before Muhammad their genealogical lineage as the descendants of Abraham and Isaac, and disparaged the Arabs for being merely the descendants of Ishmael. This, after all, is consistent with the view of Hebrew scriptures which has God's *Heilsgeschichte* run selectively from Abraham through Isaac to Jacob, and in effect writes Ishmael out

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[298] Raheb, Raheb, "Contextualizing the Scripture", p. 192.

[299] See Reuven Firestone, *Jihad: The origin of Holy War in Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 70ff; Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, London: SCM Press, 1996, 2003, pp. 196–223.

[300] It is to be noted that anti-Jewish Muslim polemic has emphasized the Medinan suras rather than the Meccan. See Camilla Adang: "Medieval Muslim Polemics against the Jewish Scriptures" in Jacques Waardenburg (ed), *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions*, Oxford, 1999, pp. 143–159; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Some Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics against Christianity", *Harvard Theological Review*, 89:1 (1996) 61–84. Lazarus-Yafeh further suggests that Islamic challenge to the consistency and integrity of the Bible might have contributed to the rise of Bible critical scholarship in the 18th and 19th centuries. See also Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined World: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. Likewise in the writings of Islamists such as Sayyid Qutb, see See, Asher Z. Lopatin, "the Uncircumcised Jewish heart in Sayyid Qutb's Tafsīr: Qur'anic parrellels to Jewish conceptions" in Ronald L. Nettler (ed), *Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations,* Vol. 1, Chapter 6, Reading: Harwood Academic Publishers; Neal Robinson, "Sayyid Qutb's Attitude Towards Christian: Sūra 9. 29–35 in *Fī Zilāl Al-Qur'ān"*, in Lloyd Ridgeon (ed), *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, London: Curzon, p. 159–178.

> of the story.[301] The Qur'an's decentralized *Heilsgeschichte* therefore places all prophets—Isaac and Ishmael included—in equal rank in the sight of God. Ishmael was rescued from the shadows of Jewish *Heilsgeschichte,* and with him the Arabs were given equal status to the Jews.[302]

Raheb suggests that Muhammad's experiences in Medina echo those of St. Paul in his disagreements with Jews regarding the legacy of Abraham and whether it was for the Jews alone. This point has striking echoes with the thinking of 20th century Islamist writers, notably Sayyid Qutb, who saw the Zionists of his time as a recapitulation of the Medinian disputes.[303]

In the context of theology and hermeneutics as they relate to the Land, Raheb suggests that the Prophet Muhammad continues to play a critical role: taking up as he did the cause of the excluded and marginalized, he rejects the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Jews that rendered Arabs inferior, and gives equal status to all the prophets, and by definition to Jews, Christians and Muslims. His overall conclusion therefore was that Muhammad merely contextualized and Arabized the Bible. However, as Leonard Marsh has noted, this amounts to an "Islamicization of Christianity", another manifestation of Marcionism

[301] *Heilsgeschichte*: literally "salvation history" and was particularly used in German Biblical criticism from the 18th century. In combined theology with Hegelian philosophy to describe the linear development of God's action in the world through particular events in history.
[302] Earlier in the said article Raheb refers to the scholarship of Johann Fück who suggests that the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Qur'an does reveal an understanding comparable to that of the Bible—the Jews as the People of Israel, or in Christianity the centrality of Christ. Thus, there a "decentralization" of Qur'anic *Heilsgeschichte*. "Decentralized" is the term that Fück offers in preference to "cyclical". This Qur'anic *Heilsgeschichte* emphasizes the call the to worship the one God, and therefore expressed in atemporal terms.
[303] See further Ronald L. Nettler, *Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations*, Oxford, 1995; Neil Robinson, "Sayyid Qutb's Attitude to Christianity: Sura 9. 29–35 in Fi Zilal Al-Quran", in Lloyd-Ridgeon, *Islamic Interpretations of* Christianity, London: MacMillan 2001.

within Palestinian Christianity, and even a “de-Biblicising” of the Bible. A further question relates to the way he uses the Medinan suras: has Raheb Christianized aspects of Muslim anti-Jewish polemic in the cause of Palestinian liberation? Can we go further and ask whether he has in fact not contributed to the emergence of a distinctive Middle Eastern Christian identity but one which is derived from and dependent upon an Islamic understanding of the religious other?[304]

For Younan the hermeneutical challenges are also related to his Lutheran theological heritage. Justice, being the predominant theme of the Old Testament, is also a critical issue for one of the central themes of Lutheran theology, namely “justification by faith alone”, and is therefore a profoundly spiritual as well as a political issue:

> As long as human beings are far from God, then true justice is far from the world. As long as justice is deeply rooted in self-interest, economy and power, then God’s justification has no value for true justice. As long as justice has double or triple standards, then it contradicts the power of the cross. This is true justice: that God has redeemed all humanity equally, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or race, whether powerful or weak, rich or poor, from North or South, east or West.[305]

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[304] A. O’Mahony (ed.), *The Christian Communities of Jerusalem and the Holy Land: Studies in History, Religion and Politics*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003.
[305] Younan, “Reformation Day Message”, 31 October 2002, in Ann E. Hafften (ed), *Water from the Rock: Lutheran Voices from Palestine*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003, pp. 18–23.

He highlights a tension between the “spiritual” and the “secular” concerns. On the one hand a strongly Lutheran emphasis upon salvation freely given without human action or works, and the requirements of justice.

Younan’s solution to this theological difficulty is by a return to Scripture, and in particular the Old Testament where justice is “grounded in God’s divine nature”. The key passages are Isaiah 1.17, 58.6 and Micah 6.8 which stress liberation of the oppressed, the breaking of every yoke and a call to walk with justice and humility with God. The New Testament’s stress upon salvation from the Cross and justification of sinful humanity with the need of human action places the Church in the contemporary age in a unique place. Contrasting the political rhetoric of “the axis of evil” that was spoken of by President George W. Bush in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks in 2001, Younan speaks of the Church as the “axis of hope”:

> Where politicians see barriers, the Christian church finds companions with whom it can join to oppose the barbarism of death, destruction and demonization. United in its opposition, the church becomes the “axis of hope” created by the Spirit, sharing in God’s loving dream for all peoples and the whole creation. Wherever the church finds people truly affirming the sacredness of life, there we find the Spirit of Life at work creating an axis of hope. The mercy of God’s future appears, creating a spiral—not of violence but of life—working for justice that alone holds the promise of peace in our world.[306]

This is the vocation of Palestinian Christianity, says Younan:

[306] Younan, in “Water from the Rock”, pp. 21f.

> It is called to condemn injustice but at the same time to bring hope, work for justice, and prepare a generation of hope and peace … It is the call of the church to condemn oppression, occupation, and violence in our country, but at the same time to call for just peace for both Israel and Palestine according to international legitimacy.

Elsewhere Younan has related this to the Incarnation and to the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. Drawing again upon Lutheran theology he stresses that Palestinian Lutheran Christianity is rooted in the land that has a specificality to it—the place where the salvation by grace alone was made manifest—but one that is today lived in the context of the dominance of Judaism and Islam: "steeped in a theology of merit". He expands this particular point:

> In both the Hebrew scriptures and the Qur'an, there is a strong theology of retribution, of a punishing God who must be pleased through works of merit. But as Christians living in the theology of grace, we know the love of God in Christ that justifies us freely by faith, a love that extends to all people and sinners, to those who are marginalized and oppressed, and to their oppressors.[307]

There are two striking contrasts to be drawn here. The first is how the Land in Palestinian Christianity is understood as the place where divine grace was incarnated which contrasts with the atemporal spirituality of Western

[307] Younan, "The future of the Lutheran Reformation Tradition: From the Persepectve of Palestinian Christians", in Arland Jaconson and James Aegeson (eds), *The Future of Lutheranism in a Global Context*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press 1989, pp. 99–113.

Christianity that we discussed earlier. The second contrast is between what Younan calls the theology of grace and the theology of merit. Elsewhere we have identified how Younan has regarded Islam as the faith that is closest to Christianity in the Middle Eastern context. And that may well be the case when read historically and sociologically. But in theological terms his Lutheran tradition reveals the distinctiveness of Christianity (as opposed to Judaism and Islam). These two distinctions are important as we identify the ingredients of an emerging theology of the land.

These reflections from Palestinian theologians about the use of hermeneutics brings into focus an important missiological question about how the Bible is to be used when addressing contemporary events and issues. This of course is much wider than the Israel Palestine conflict and relates to issues as diverse ask the climate emergency, human sexuality, embryo research or gender equality. Thus, we might observe that there a larger theological debate as to how scripture is to be applied in a post-modern context with tension and even conflict between those that hold to an atemporal, literalist interpretation and those who seek to develop a more nuanced approach that is grounded in the human question for justice. What Palestinian theologians point to are the dangers of over literalized and superficial readings of scripture, and this is especially the case in respect of Christian Zionism and their considerable influence in policy making in the United States.

We might therefore note some other ecclesial perspectives on the question of hermeneutics. Within the Catholic tradition, the return to Biblical foundation at the Second Vatican Council raised important questions for a Biblical hermeneutic of the land in Palestine. In their survey of the Land and the Bible,

Alain Marchadour and David Neuhaus, discuss the challenges that surface. These include the dangers of fundamentalist interpretations of Scripture, the need to acknowledge the possibility of a Jewish interpretation of Scripture whilst at the same time not denying a Christian interpretation of the Old Testament.[308]

With regard to fundamentalism, they refer to “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” (1993), from the Pontifical Biblical Commission which states that fundamentalism fails to acknowledge “the historical character of Biblical revelation” and as such is impeded from understanding “the full truth of the Incarnation itself”. It sees the Bible alone as the answer to every conceivable problem, injects false certainty and even “invites people into a kind of intellectual suicide.”

It is the 2001 document “The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible” from the Pontifical Biblical Commission that suggests that Christians should allow for the possibility of a Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament. This is clearly something that many Christians and Churches continue to struggle with. The Methodist Church in Britain, in its 2010 report to Methodist Conference “Justice for Palestine and Israel”, whilst not attempting any detailed hermeneutical analysis reflects the struggle that many Christians have with the continuing covenant with the Jews as it is manifested in the Land:

> It sits uncomfortably with many modern Methodists to imagine a God who singles out individuals or groups in order to promise possessions;

[308] Alain Marchadour and David Neuhaus, *The Land, the Bible and History*, pp. 150–159.

> there is distaste, for example, with a "health and wealth gospel" in most quarters. It seems to conjure up a notion of favouritism, with an image of God dispossessing some peoples in order to grant land to his chosen ones.[309]

A more detailed attempt at a hermeneutic of the Land was attempted by the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) in its 2013 report to its General Assembly "The Inheritance of Abraham". One of the criticisms made of the initial published report was that it seemed to deny the validity of particular Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament. Although this was subsequently revised following conversations with the Jewish community in Scotland,[310] it nevertheless suggests a way of reading the Old Testament that does not acknowledge particular Jewish interpretations, drawing only from Jewish writers such as Marc Ellis and Mark Bravermann who adopt a more anti-Zionism approach:

> To Christians in the 21st century, promises about the land of Israel shouldn't be intended to be taken literally, or as applying to a defined geographical territory; they are a way of speaking about how to live under God so that justice and peace reign, the weak and poor are protected, the stranger is included, and all have a share in the community and a contribution to make to it. The "promised land" in the

[309] "Justice for Palestine and Israel", report to the Methodist Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain (2010), http://www. methodist. org. uk/downloads/conf10a-14-pal-israel-160211. pdf. (accessed 12/09/2019)

[310] See the Church of Scotland's statement of the 27th May 2013 http://www. churchofscotland. org. uk/news_and_events/news/archive/articles/2013/the_inheritance_of_abraham_revised_report_released. The revised report was subsequently revised and passed by the Assembly: http://www. churchofscotland. org. uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/14050/the_Inheritance_of_Abraham. pdf. (accessed 12/09/2019)

> Bible is not a place, so much as a metaphor of how things ought to be among the people of God. This ”promised land” can be found—or built—anywhere.[311]

The Church of Scotland report is illustrative of the hermeneutical challenges that are faced in respect of a theology of the Land. “The Inheritance of Abraham” attempts, at least in part, to counter some of the Christian Zionist ideas that had been accepted in many parts of the Church. It suggests that it may well have been a Church of Scotland minister who first coined the phrase “a land without a people, for a people without a land”. But in so doing falls into the very dangers that of not allowing for the *possibility* of a Jewish interpretation of Scripture. And both the Methodist and Church of Scotland illustrations are indicative of a tension within the Jewish-Christian encounter namely between the particularity of Judaism and the universality of Christianity and how this older question becomes acute in the context of the reversed power dynamic in the Holy Land today.

Meanwhile, Marchadour and Neuhaus also acknowledge the important human desire for rootedness in a land. Quoting again from “The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christ Bible” (2001):

> Every human group wishes to inhabit territory in a permanent manner. Otherwise, reduced to the status of stranger or refugee, it finds itself, at best, tolerated, or at worst, exploited and continually oppressed.[312]

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[311] “The Inheritance of Abraham”, Church of Scotland 2013, p. 9.
[312] Marchadour and Neuhaus, *The Land, the Bible and History*, p. 155.

This not only describes the critical issues of Scripture in relation to the Land but also describes the context of Jews in Europe prior to 1948 and to Palestinians in the contemporary period.

This issue is also identified by Walter Brueggemann in his book on the Land:

> The sense of being lost, displaced, and homeless is pervasive on contemporary culture. The yearning to belong somewhere, to have a home, to be in a safe place, is a deep and moving pursuit. Loss of place and yearning for place are dominant images … This of course is not a new struggle but is more widespread and visible than it has ever been. Nor is this sense alien to the Biblical promise of faith. The Bible itself is primarily concerned with the issue of being displaced and yearning for a place. Indeed, the Bible promises precisely what the modern world denies.[313]

Meanwhile for Marchadour and Neuhaus the Catholic tradition in the post Vatican II context warns of two potential dangers in a hermeneutic of the Land in the context of Israel-Palestine. The first of these is where scripture is allegorized, where the political and historical realities of the Land are dissolved. The second is the danger, found most prevalent in the Jewish-Christian dialogical paradigm, where Christian interpretation of the Old Testament is delegitimized.[314]

In light of the scholarship offered by Marchadour and Neuhaus, where might we position Palestinian Protestant writers in relation to a hermeneutic of the

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[313] Walter Bruegemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002, second edition, pp. 1ff.
[314] Marchadour and Neuhaus, op. cit., p. 157.

Land? Raheb is most critical of the Jewish-Christian dialogical paradigm that has been championed within Western Churches. He has suggested that Western Christianity whilst it attempts to free itself of “replacement theology” has inadvertently created a new replacement theology whereby the Palestinians are replaced by the Jews of Israel. With regard to any acknowledgement of the possibility of a Jewish reading of Scripture the difficulty for writers such as Raheb, Younan and also Ateek is that Jewish-Zionist readings, whilst accounting for the predominant hermeneutical tradition also receive strong support from Christian Zionist writers, who are perceived to hold considerable power and influence, especially within North America, but as we have seen from the Church of Scotland’s report, can be found as the context of some British ecclesial assumptions concerning the Land.

A countering—even repudiation—of Christian Zionism has been an issue of central importance to Palestinian Protestant thinking and more widely within the Palestinian supporting constituency more widely. It is out of this context that reports such as “The Inheritance of Abraham” and “Justice for Palestine and Israel” emerge.

3.8 Christian-Muslim Relations in the Palestinian Context

In our discussions of the writings of Raheb and Younan the matter of Christian-Muslim relations thave been a recurring theme. Both writers offer us a picture of mostly harmonious relations, yet when we turn to the wider historical perspective a more complex picture emerges. In the Mandate period Muslims widely believed that the Christians were receiving better treatment

from the British and this played a part during the Arab Uprising (1936–39) when Christians were reluctant to participate. Calls for boycotts of Christian businesses, whilst condemned by Arab Islamic authorities, nonetheless reflect a situation whereby relationships were strained.[315]

From Muhammad's time onwards Christianity was viewed as disunited, led astray by the corruption both of the Torah by Jews and the Gospels by Paul. However, whilst Islam is an abrogating tradition from the standpoint of Judaism and Christianity, in Islamic thought it is the primal religion, with Adam as the first Prophet of Islam and in this respect, we see the recurring theme of Islam's ontological atemporality: for whilst it is viewed by non-Muslims as emerging in history after Judaism and Christianity, its insistence upon its primordial essence places it beyond and outside of human history. To put it differently, Islam could never have a "scandal of particularity", such as Judaism (the Covenant) and Christianity (the Cross and Resurrection) have, which is part of Islam's difficulty with these two faiths. Islam universalizes, rather than particularizes, the salvific promises of the other two, but can only achieve this by claiming at atemporal and primal reality of its revelation.

Central to the "errors" of Christianity in Islamic perspective are claims of Christ's divinity, the death of Christ on the cross, his resurrection and the doctrine of the Trinity. The latter is of particularly importance as the Qur'an denies that God can have any "partners" or that God can "beget". The difficulties that Islam has with the doctrine of the Trinity, that it seems to "dilute" absolute monotheism, might suggest that Islam views Christianity less

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[315] Krämer, *History of Palestine*, pp. 286f.

favourably than Judaism. Yet in some early Islamic sources a hierarchy of religious other is suggested with Christianity abrogating Judaism first, and Christianity being abrogated by Muhammad.[316]

In her research into boundaries between different faith groups in Nablus, in the West Bank, Julia Droeber, explores some of the issues of public and private discourse between minorities and majorities. These are identified in terms of Muslims, Christians, Jews and Samaritans. She draws upon the analysis of James C. Scott: the “hidden and public transcripts”: the “public transcript” is the interaction between those that are in a socially subordinated position and those that are dominant. The “hidden transcript” takes place “offstage” where powerholders are not hearing, participated or even observing the interaction. The “hidden” might be within the family or it might be in the place of worship. The “powerful” also have their own “hidden transcript” which focuses upon “the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed”.[317]

Drawing upon Scott, Droeber suggests that in the Middle East the “public transcript” of good neighbours is the one that predominates unless there is an outbreak of conflict, especially violent, and it is the “public” that is the main focus of most studies of inter-religious relations in different parts of the world, particularly the Middle East. It is in the interests of the majority to describe a context of friendship and benevolence towards minorities and whilst that may

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[316] See Friedmann, op. cit., pp. 22ff.
[317] Julia Droeber, *The Dynamics of Co-Existence in the Middle East: Negotiating Boundaries between Christians, Muslims, Jews and Samaritans in Palestine*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2014, p. 10ff.

not be untrue it is a description from a certain point of view. Droeber quotes Scott:

> (the public discourse) is designed to be impressive, to affirm and naturalize the power of dominant elites, and to conceal or euphemize the dirty linen of their rule.

Droeber then observes that the religious leadership of minorities will feel the need to affirm the public transcript and may not to the same extent participate in the "hidden transcript" of the laity. She also suggests that Muslim emphasis upon the "People of the Book" as a means of describing Jews and Muslims is aimed at both impressing the minorities within their context but also (and perhaps more significantly) Jews and Christians worldwide.[318]

We have already seen in earlier sections how Islam views the religious other, and how, in what might be called the "classical Islamic era" Christians and Jews who came under Islamic rule were deemed "People of the Book" and offered the protection of the status of *al-Dhimmi* in return for the payment of *jizya* tax. We have also seen how Palestinian Christians have found themselves in a context whereby they have been "caught between" two strong religious/political narratives of Zionism in the State of Israel and the Islamist narrative throughout the Arab world. Their religious and cultural identity is therefore squeezed, leaving Palestinian writers and theologians with a difficult task of defining their Christian identity in such a way that does not place too much distance between Christian and Muslim Palestinians. This difficulty is

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[318] The Jordanian initiative "A Common Word Between Us and You" (2007), signed by more than 100 Muslim scholars from around the world is one such example. Addressed to Christian leaders, it leans heavily on this "public discourse". See further Miroslav Volf, and Ghazi bin Muhammad, *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbour*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2010.

reflected in what Younan and Raheb state about the historic and current relationship between Christians and Muslims.

3.9 Palestinian Christianity and Judaism in the thinking of Kenneth Cragg

Having looked at emerging issues for a theology of the Land through the perspective of two Palestinians from the Lutheran tradition, what further reflections might we offer? To assist us with this we turn to the thought of Bishop Kenneth Cragg, a renowned Christian scholar of Islam, whose extensive writings draw on wider issues concerning the Middle East and its pluralism.[319] To a greater extent Cragg, Younan and Raheb are a meeting of minds: they are deeply critical of the policies of Israel, they agree about many aspects of the history of Palestine and its implications for Palestinians and they all share a strong sense of a Christian-Islamic tradition that has strong roots in Arab culture.

Kenneth Cragg (1913–2012) was a distinguished Christian theologian and scholar of Islam with a deep engagement with the wider Middle East over a long period across many decades. This included periods of ministry and teaching in Beirut (1939–47), Canon at St. George's Cathedral (1956–1959), Assistant Bishop of Jerusalem (1970–74), the latter included a period of residency in Egypt and a good deal of travel around the Middle East (including Iraq). Although Cragg is renowned for his distinctive approach to Christian-Muslim relations, throughout his writings he demonstrates a continuous

[319] Cragg's interest in the Holy Land are to be found in a number of his writings, including Kenneth Cragg, *This Year in Jerusalem*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982; *Palestine, the Prize and Price of* Zionism, London: Cassell 1997; *The Excellences of Jerusalem*, Altajir World of Islam Trust, 2000; *The Iron in the Soul: Joseph and the undoing of violence*. London: Melisende, 2009.

interest in Jerusalem, and the issues of Palestine and Israel. Rooted as he was in his scholarship of Islam, his exploration of the issues posed by Israel-Palestine leads him to describe this land as “competitively loved”. Alongside Judaism and Christianity, Islam too holds a particularity about Jerusalem—known in Arabic as al-Quds—traditionally associated with Night Journey of Muhammad and was the earlier orientation of prayer (rather than Mecca). This sense of being “competitively loved” is amply illustrated by Cragg’s own writings and his chronology.

The bulk of Cragg’s writings are concerned with Arabic and Islam and offer not only a theology of Christian engagement with Islam, but an apologetic whereby a Christ lost to Islam might be retrieved. Cragg’s attention to Judaism is less substantial but not insignificant. His primary concern is with Zionism, the State of Israel and its impact on the Christian and Muslim worlds. Therefore, his writings offer an important starting point in understanding both the theological issues for a recalibrated context of the Jewish-Christian encounter.

He explores Zionism and its impact upon the Arab population of the Levant and investigates what he sees as the negative consequences of Zionism as a political movement based upon Judaism as a religion. Throughout Cragg’s writings there is an acknowledgement of the challenge of hermeneutics, which he summarizes in a characteristically dramatic way:

> How should we read now the ardent prophecies of “the land” and return from exile? In particular, how should Arab Christians do so in painful ambiguity of “blessing the Lord God of Israel” when the Israel is that of Menachem Begin, Moshe Sharon, Rabbi Kahane and the Ansar

> internment camps—not the Israel of Zechariah the priest or of Luke the Christian in their Benedictus?

His own observation about Zionism is particularly astute, observing that "statehood is sacrilized" which he declares cannot be unilaterally undertaken in the modern world.

For Cragg the key event to understanding Palestinian plight is the Holocaust and he expresses a deep empathy with Jews but wrestles with the impact of the creation of the State of Israel. In this Cragg has important observations with regard to the work of Holocaust survivor and writer Elie Wiesel.[320] Wiesel was emphatic that Israel's creation should not be seen as the answer to the Holocaust, yet for him the realization of Zionist aspiration was a repudiation of Nazis nihilism. For Wiesel Israel represented

> a determination to transform the hate imposed upon it into a craving for solidarity with the world.

We have noted so far, the significance of the Six Day War in 1967 and it is also a turning point in Cragg's writers on the Holy Land where he becomes more emphatic about the injustices suffered by Palestinians. For Wiesel it was an important moment when Zionist aspiration was fully vindicated. It is here that the Holocaust and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict become conflated as Wiesel notes that the criticism of the international community amounted to a begrudging attitude and that,

[320] Kennth Cragg, *Troubled by Truth: Biographies in the Presence of Mystery*, Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press 1994, pp.74-90

> They love the Jew only on the cross: if he is not there, well they can oblige.

Cragg's comment on this points to some of the irony in his position and reflects more broadly some of the moral complexity posed by Israel (as the negator of Nazis nihilism) in relationship with the peoples of Middle East and the world more broadly:

> He saw the occupation, in 1967, as necessary "for the moment", and imagined the Israel of Arab eyes as 'a non-nation peopled with "non-persons", not appreciating how a "non-peopling" attitude to Palestinians was present in the language of leaders such as Golda Meyer (sic), Menachem Begin and Rabbi Kahan. Israel had "an unrelenting will not to assume a destiny other than her own."[321]

This is not the only place where Cragg wrestles with this complexity. Elsewhere he suggests that the enormity and scale of the atrocity inflicted upon the Jews by the Nazis in the Holocaust, combined with Jewish "exceptionalism" has led Israel to inflict a vicarious punishment upon the Palestinians:

> That ineluctable situation entails on the Palestinian people a strange vicarious destiny impossible either to escape or sustain … The Holocaust which so tragically underlies and undergirds Israel's rightfulness in its own eyes, was a German, not a Palestinian, enormity. The Nazis myth of Aryan chosenness and destiny could not tolerate the divine status of the Jews … But it is the Arab world that is

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[321] *Cragg, Troubled by Truth, p.89*

> uniquely the sphere of the cost of Israel and, therefore, where the burden of Israel, as that by which Jewishness outlives the Holocaust, exacts its price in the homes and persons and fate of others. [322]

Thus, Cragg links together Jewish particularity, the Holocaust and the plight of the Palestinians. In this respect Cragg is part of a significant corpus of opinion that has often made these connections. Douglas Pratt, in his exploration of Islamic paradigms in Muslim-Jewish relations, reflects this point of view suggesting that

> the founding of the State of Israel is to some degree the legacy of the relationship of Judaism to Christianity. Beginning with the early ejection from the synagogues of the new Christian 'sect', the emergence of Christianity as something 'other' than Judaism, centuries of antisemitism culminating in the Holocaust—it is this trajectory that was to lead to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.[323]

The sense of the creation of the State of Israel as the result of a trajectory that was external to the Middle East is yet another resonance with Palestinian Christian writings that have protested that Palestinians have been made to suffer for the Holocaust. Jewish writers such as Mark Braverman and Marc Ellis have written about the consequences of post-Holocaust theology on the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

It is the ethical questions with which Cragg wrestles the most and are a particular dimension to the new dynamics of the Holy Land as the new context

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[322] Kenneth Cragg, *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East*. London: Mowbray 1992, pp.28ff

[323] Douglas Pratt: "Muslim-Jewish relations: some Islamic paradigms", in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* Vol.21, No.1, January 2010, 11-21.

for the Jewish-Christian encounter. The actions of the State of Israel—the demolition of villages, creating refugees of thousands and the casualties that resulted from its military actions—raises profound ethical questions. Thus, observes Cragg, Israel is “holy” in its own eyes and “unethical” in the eyes of others, including many of its own citizens. The notion of the “unethical holy” that the realization of Zionism represents is, according to Cragg, a dimension of a Judaism that has been taken hostage by Zionism:

> So Zionism stays in captivity to the sorrows where its own strategies have led, strategies alike unready for the crucial territorial decisiveness and accentuating the will to obduracy where it was most imperative to undo it by a brave negotiability. A moment with a personality that might have redeemed all was destroyed by an assassin from within. The vision of peace is forfeit to the necessity of oppression. While it tarries, tyranny abides. To be inclusive in the land or exclusive with the land was always the alternative on which Zionism would turn, whether or not its founding logic and philosophy discerned it. For they had every historical reason to will not to do so. But in the event, in the translation of dream into state, and quest into power, discerning it was imperative. That “if” question persists, either to haunt and cripple its success or to advertise its failure.[324]

So was Cragg an anti-Zionist, and does an ecumenical solidarity with Palestinian Christians inevitably lead to such a point of view? In responding to this question Cragg bears comparison with the other significant Christian

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[324] Cragg, *The Tragic in Islam*, London: Melisande, 2004, p.152

commentator on Islam, Louis Massignon (1883–1962). Both Massignon and Cragg share a primary focus upon Islam and clearly have a deep scholarly and spiritual sympathy with the faith of Muslims (more so with Massignon) that is not necessarily matched by their view of Judaism. Massignon had initially been sympathetic to the aspirations of Zionism but came to be deeply hostile to the creation of the State of Israel, referring to it as "colonial" in intention that would lead to the exclusion of Muslim and Christian Arabs from any eventual Jewish State. Massignon thus went much further in declaring an anti-Zionist position which is explicit in his writings whereas Cragg arguably takes a more nuanced approach balancing Jewish self-understanding after the Holocaust with the human rights and nationalist aspiration of the Palestinians after the *Nakba*. Unlike Cragg, Massignon saw Palestine, and Jerusalem in particular as having special eschatological significance; the only geographic place where the spiritual intersects with the temporal; a place "predestined" to be holy and the place that would witness the Second Coming of Christ. But like Cragg, he recognized the importance of history—especially religious history—of the Holy Land and is relationship to contemporary events including the State of Israel and its legitimacy.

Cragg however, was wary of simple accusations that the creation of the State of Israel was merely another manifestation of European colonialism, but that Zionism's roots lay in the experience of the Jews in Europe:

> (Europe) offered survival at the price of emasculation of identity. They differed from outright hostility only in the subtlety of their ways. They offered no final salvation from the ignominy and the despair of flagrant persecution and pogrom and were themselves liable to erupt into

> outrage of their own sort. Rather than trust Gentile philosophies of toleration or opportunities for autonomy, it would be better to emulate European nationalisms in “auto-emancipation”. Always the vital components of such liberation were place and power. Zionism, likewise, must be territorial and political.[325]

Yet Cragg observes that the establishment of the State of Israel does bear some comparison with a much earlier group of settlers, fleeing Europe, in search of religious liberty in a new world, that was so-far, “uncultivated and unpopulated” . The earlier settlers in what was to become the United States of America, had fled Europe following religious persecution and discrimination. There was a view amongst the Pilgrim Fathers that the land was not owned and there for the taking. The indigenous inhabitants were regarded as largely migratory and certainly without civilization. They could therefore be legitimately displaced even if this meant acting in ways that were contrary to the teachings of their faith. In time of course the descendants of the earlier American settlers had to find an accommodation with the indigenous inhabitants of the land. Although this historical parallel may be an uneven one it none the less is one that Cragg believes helps us to understand the close political bond which Israel has had with the United States of America.

Cragg, we say, with his deep roots within the Arab world and a strong sense of empathy with Jewish suffering, offers an important contribution to the emerging context of the Holy Land as the new context for the Jewish-Christian

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[325] Kenneth Cragg, *This Year in Jerusalem*. London: Dartman, Longman & Todd 1982, p.16f

encounter in its easterly tilt, especially if Eastern Christian voices are considered axiomatic to this inter-religious encounter.

3.10 Emerging Issues and Conclusion

The religious plurality and political complexity of the Middle East is the new theatre of the Jewish-Christian encounter and a critical player in this is Eastern Christianity which comes with an historical and present-day encounter with Islam which is culturally and linguistically rooted. Whilst we have noted that for Eastern Christianity, Islam rather than Judaism is the primary religious other, Judaism's stepping into this context with a strong sense of its own political liberation and autonomy raises critical issues for Christian self-understanding in an Eastern context that are significantly different from those that Western Christianity faces. Therefore, at this point where we conclude our exploration of Palestinian Christianity, we might summarize these emerging issues as follows:

(i) Ecclesial Identity and the Land

Eastern Christianity finds its identity in the land and culture of the Middle East and shares a cultural and sometimes religious language with its primary religious other. Yet Western Christianity often fails to understand the importance of this. For the Palestinian theologians, the land is an intrinsic part of their identity as Palestinian Christians. This has several features. First, there is a plea to global (and particularly Western) Christianity to take greater note of the presence and unbroken continuity in the land of Palestine and

therefore Palestinian theologians invariably write with a Western readership in mind. Critical to this “Western facing message” is the importance of the Palestinian people’s experience in history, lived under empires over many centuries. But is also a deeply incarnational theological presence that prizes and cherishes the unbroken connection not only to the Holy Land but to the faith of the Apostles in this place.

(ii) Hermeneutics and the land

Approaches to reading the Bible—Old and New Testaments—are of particular importance to Palestinian theologians. They are part of the historical narrative of the Palestinian people but present a generational challenge in that for the first time (since 1948) they have been forced to read the Bible—and particularly the Old Testament—in the context of Israel, a Jewish State, overtly defined in Davidic and Biblical terms with the warning from Archbishop Michel Sabbah, of falling into a neo-Marcionism. How much of this is concerned with the construction of narrative that has a bearing upon the present, or whether it helps to create a vision of the future is an important question for further exploration. We have also seen how this has been an important challenge for Biblical hermeneutics in relation to the land more widely in global Christianity.

(iii) Religious pluralism

Finally, but by no means of lesser importance is the matter of religious plurality and the land and how their different understandings of the land help or hinder a greater understanding of Christian presence in the Holy Land. The

Jewish temporal yearning, the atemporal notions of religion within Islam, Jewish-Zionist hegemony, the dominance of Islamist polity and the varying degrees of theological ambiguity with a Christian theology of the land are the specific factors here. John T. Pawlikowski suggests that Christianity is not alone in having problems that relate to the land that is Israel/Palestine and advocates the development of a "theology of belonging" whereby Christian theology can take account of both Judaism and Islam.[326]

This context of eastern Christianity, is the cultural and ecclesial reality which Judaism encounters in the geo-political context of the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st.

Having therefore explored both a Zionist understanding of the place in the modern world and Palestinian thought regarding and land and theology we next turn to what are the emerging features of the Jewish-Christian encounter in the new context of the Holy Land. What are the issues that are carried eastward from Europe that are still of theological importance in the Jewish-Christian encounter and what new challenges are presented? This easterly tilt that we have so far described has brought the Jewish-Christian encounter into the often-completing self-understandings of Zionist thought and Palestinian theology: how is this new theatre of inter-religious encounter to be navigated? To help us explore this we turn next to the Israeli Jesuit, David Neuhaus, a "thinker in motion", who will guide us through the emerging issues and questions.

[326] Pawlikowski: "Ethics in a Globalized World", p. 546.

CHAPTER 4

Tilting Eastwards: Land and the Jewish-Christian Encounter in the work of Father David Mark Neuhaus SJ

4.1 Introduction

Hitherto we have argued that there has been an easterly tilt of the axis of Jewish-Christian relations that has been brought about by the reorientation of Jewish self-understanding towards the modern State of Israel. What we have not so far discussed is the nature of the Jewish-Christian encounter in the Middle East. To help us with this we will look at the work of Fr David Mark Neuhaus SJ and offer an exegesis of his writings in the light of this question. In doing so we are largely stepping over the theological debates as to the place of Judaism in Christian self-understanding to a consideration of the implications for inter-religious understanding in a Middle Eastern context.[327] After introducing Neuhaus, we turn to his life and work and in particular the ecclesial context in Israel and Palestine out of which he speaks. We then move to examining three main features of his work that are pertinent to the question of the Jewish-Christian encounter: (1) the issues and challenges laid down by *Nostra Aetate* and in particular the matter of whether Christian theology recognizes the ongoing validity of the Jewish covenant, (2) the Holy Land context of the contemporary Jewish encounter with special reference to the developing teaching of the Catholic Church, (3) Jewish identity and the quest for theology of land. Having explored these three main themes in

[327] The early Zionist language of the Jews "stepping back into history" had the unforeseen consequence of finding its way in another religiously plural context that was arguably no more favourable that its old European home.

Neuhaus' work we then turned to another Catholic thinker, the British theologian Gavin d'Costa's tentative exploration of the prospects of a minimal Catholic Zionism and reflecting on these ideas in the light of Neuhaus' work and the easterly context of the Jewish-Christian encounter in the 21st century.

In this chapter we will explore some of the key questions posed by Jewish-Christian dialogue in relation to the land with this easterly tilt that we have been observing in the Jewish-Christian encounter. To accompany us in this exploration is Fr Father David Neuhaus, a South African-born Israeli Jesuit whose work amply illustrates the easterly tilt in the Catholic-Jewish encounter since the first appearance of *Nostra Aetate*. His writings that will be examined in this chapter are those that are specifically concerned with Jewish-Christian dialogue up until the completion of his time as Episcopal Vicar for Hebrew Speaking Catholics and Migrants in Israel (2009–2017). We will describe him as a "thinker in motion", whose Catholic thought, whilst fully cognizant of the developments of Catholic thinking since Vatican II, is fully contextualized in the rapidly changing context of Israel, Palestine and the wider Middle East. We will observe too how he is a new voice that speaks out of a new context (for the Jewish-Christian relations) and as such subtly repositions the dialogue between the two faiths.

4.2 David Neuhaus: An Introduction to his life, work and ecclesial context

(i) From South Africa to Jerusalem

David Neuhaus as one of the leading voices within the Israeli Catholic community is uniquely placed to offer perspectives on Jewish-Catholic relations, as well as the wider issues regarding the development of Jewish-Christian relations in a more global context. We will be characterizing Neuhaus as a thinker in motion and this dynamic quality to his writings is grounded not only in his experience of living in the Holy Land but through his own personal history.[328] In fact we might observe from the outset that his parents had fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s finding a home in South Africa. Neuhaus was therefore born and raised amidst the anti-apartheid struggle which was of critical international importance at the time. He travelled to Israel in 1977 when he was 15 years old where his parents hoped he would find an alternative to the racist situation in Southern Africa. Prior to his arrival in Israel protesting black youths had been gunned down by the security service and the year of his departure saw the murder of Steve Biko.[329] His parents, having already fled a place of violence and fear, feared for their son's future and Israel, seen by many Jews as offering a future of security and flourishing, was the natural place to go: Israel signalled the "stepping into Jewish history", and

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[328] It is noteworthy that in his own collection of articles, he begins with a very person introduction and shares something of his personal story and journey: David Neuhaus, *Writing from the Holy Land*, Jerusalem: STS Publications, 2017, pp. 5–10, see also "60 Minute Conversations with Jesuit History Series—A Conversation with David M. Neuhaus, SJ", *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 4 (2017), Brill, pp. 659–677.

[329] The resonances between the political contexts of Israel-Palestine and Apartheid South Africa have become increasingly significant in political and commentary however the young David Neuhaus may be one of the first to see the resonance. For exploration of this area, see Donald Harman Akenson, *God's Peoples: Covenant and Land in South Africa, Israel and Ulster*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

therefore not so much a running away from conflict as a running towards a Jewish flourishing future and security.

But having arrived there the young David Neuhaus saw firsthand the divisions and conflict in a land that most Jews in the postwar period viewed as their place of safety and liberation. In his own account of these years, one is struck by the reality that David Neuhaus' writings emerge from a context of dynamic, turbulent and unstable circumstances. He records that as a teenager in Jerusalem he was always drawn to "the other side", that of East Jerusalem which he describes as "pulsating with energy": the Old City, home for centuries to ancient communities of Arab Christians and Muslims. It was here that he experienced inter-faith dialogue for the first time, finding friendship with Oussama, a Palestinian Muslim from Jerusalem. This was also the city in which he began his studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, a symbolically important place of learning in Jewish-Israeli consciousness, having been founded in 1918, as a fulfilment of Zionist intent, and formally opened in 1925. He went on to study theology in Catholic centres in Paris and Rome before returning to Israel. He has also served time in an Israeli military prison for refusing military service.

It was his encounter with Christians especially of the orthodox tradition that would lead him on the trajectory to embrace the Christian faith. Ultimately, he would find a home in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem becoming a priest and a member of the Society of Jesus. A key influence on Neuhaus is Archbishop Michel Sabbah, the first Arab Palestinian to become the Latin

Patriarch of Jerusalem and who ordained Neuhaus to the priesthood.[330] His own words describe this momentous day and give us a unique insight into how his spirituality came to be formed:

> I was ordained to the priesthood by Michel Sabbah in 2000 and he has been a true spiritual father to me throughout the years of my priesthood. My blood and flesh father read the first reading in Hebrew at my ordination mass. The first row in church on that day was reserved for my Jewish parents and relatives and for my adopted family Oussama and his relatives. The mass was celebrated in Arabic, Hebrew, English and French and the church was full of Israelis and Palestinians, Jews Christians and Muslims. Only three weeks later the second uprising of Palestinians began after Ariel Sharon forced his way into the Haram al-Sharif, Jerusalem's most sacred Muslim shrine, claimed by the Jews as the Temple Mount.[331]

Thus, Jerusalem is the place where we find the key to understanding Neuhaus as a "thinker in motion": he describes this city as "the matrix within which I live act and write."[332] And thus he is a Catholic theologian who seeks to understand the faith amidst the unpredictability and fast changing context in the Holy Land and its ecclesial implications.

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[330] Michel Sabbah, born in 1933 in Nazareth and was ordained priest in 1955 serving as Assistant Parish Priest in Madaba, Jordan and later Parish Priest in Amman, Jordan. His doctoral studies were in Beirut and he subsequently served as Principal of the National Secondary College in Amman (1975–80) and President of Bethlehem University (1980–88). He was Canon of the Holy Sepulchre (1985–87) before becoming the Patriarch of Jerusalem in 1987 until his retirement in 2008.
[331] Neuhaus, *Writing from the Holy Land*, p. 8f.
[332] Ibid., p. 5.

(ii) The Context and Content of Neuhaus' Writings

There are three main themes that we find in Neuhaus' writings and in some respects, these reflect the chronological trajectory of his ministry. The first is his concern for Biblical studies and its relationship to the people of faith in the Holy Land. Biblical studies were an early starting point for his theological formation after being urged by Father Rafiq Khoury to study the scriptures as the key to serving the church.[333] It is in this field of study that he published with Alain Marchadour his first book.[334] The second area of interest is Jewish-Christian relations and in particular the teaching of the Catholic Church as it has developed since Vatican II. And finally, there is his work with Hebrew Catholics in the Holy Land with whom he had a particular pastoral relationship as the Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Hebrew Speaking Catholics and Migrants in Israel. Although there is some element of historical chronology here, we might observe that all three strands of his thinking are interwoven and are not compartmentalized.

Overall, however, there is the very palpable sense of his writing on these themes out of a lived Holy Land experience as a Catholic priest of Jewish heritage. He is the only halachically Jewish Israeli Jesuit and his conversion to Christianity is something that Neuhaus has written about, pointing to the sense of vulnerability that many Jews feel towards those that become Christian, as he relates his account of the initial reaction of his own family to this change in his life.[335] But he shows no hostility towards Judaism, on the

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[333] Ibid., p. 8.
[334] Alain Marchadour and David Neuhaus, *The Land, the Bible and History*.
[335] Neuhaus' firsthand account of his own journey of faith, see *Writing from the Holy Land*, pp. 5–10.

contrary he manifests a deep respect for the Jewish tradition to which he is connected by virtue of blood, as well as faith tradition.

His pastoral ministry with Hebrew Catholics has a particularity and uniqueness to it and this brings into focus his own Jewish heritage as well as those Jews who have embraced Christianity. He quotes the words of Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger (1926–2007), Archbishop of Paris: "I was not running away from the Jewish condition. I have that from my parents, and I can never lose it. I have it from God, and he will never let me lose it."[336]

Likewise with David Neuhaus there is the real sense of a treasured inheritance that can never be lost even though he has experienced a number of what we might call spiritual modulations. And it was from that dynamic spirituality that is both Jewish and Catholic that places him within the Holy Land context.[337]

And this context has significant ecclesial diversity, not merely in terms of the traditions that would be found amongst Arabs in the Palestinian Territories (Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and other Protestants) but also a diversity that has come from former Communist countries in Eastern Europe

[336] Neuhaus, *Writing from the Holy Land*, p. 201. Lustiger is an important figure in the history of the Catholic Church in the 20th century who, as Archbishop of Paris, played an important role in his support of the Pope John Paul II (both men being Polish heritage) and who participated in the conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI. He is also significant for his insistence that he was a "fulfilled Jew" in spite of much criticism from Jews and Catholics alike. Lustiger is also one of only two bishops of Jewish heritage in the 20th century, the other being Jean-Bapiste Gurion (1934–2005), a Benedictine monk and auxiliary Bishop in the Latin patriarchates of Jerusalem who preceded David Neuhaus in pastoral responsibility for Hebrew Catholics. It may be noteworthy that whilst Gurion was made a Bishop, none of the subsequent bearers of this pastoral responsibility became Bishops and this may indicate an adjustment in ecclesial thinking in respect of Hebrew Catholics.
[337] Neuhaus is not alone in being a Catholic theologian of Jewish heritage: we might also note the work of a very different Catholic writer, that of Fr Antoine Levy (b. 1962), a French Dominican of Jewish parentage, currently a member of the theology faculty at the University of Helsinki. He is noted for his work on Jewish Christians and for the "Helsinki Initiative" which draws together Christian scholars of Jewish heritage. See further, Antoine Levy, *Jewish Church: A Catholic Approach to Messianic Judaism*, Pennsylvania: Lexington Books, 2021.

and churches that serve migrant workers. It is within this context that the Hebrew Catholic congregations are to be placed. [338] Although Hebrew-speaking congregations and Messianic Jewish groups are part of the wider ecclesial context in the State of Israel, they remain of peripheral importance in any discussion of the changing dynamics of the Jewish-Christian encounter, precisely because of the controversial status Jewish converts to Christianity present.[339] Yet he observes that there has been a convergence between Jewish Zionists (and their post-1948 triumph), Messianic movements and Christian Zionism (with its millenarian belief in the ingathering of the Jews into the Promised Land) in their insistence in the role of Jews in salvation story, even if there is some difference, if not contradiction between them.[340]

We might also note that he is also a member of the Society of Jesus which has its own rich engagement with Eastern Christianity over many centuries. Anthony O'Mahony has traced the evolving story of the Jesuits and the relationship to Eastern Christianity from its influence of Ignatius of Loyola (for whom Jerusalem had a spiritual magnetism) through the wide encounter with Orthodox traditions across the Middle East, North Africa and as far as India,

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[338] See further: David Neuhaus, "Israel" in Kenneth R. Ross, Maritz Tadros and Todd M. Johnson (eds), *Christianity in North Africa and West Asia*, Edinburgh, 2018, pp. 127–139; Writings from the Holy Land, STS Publications 2017, pp. 199–2011; Maria C.Rioli, *A Liminal Church: Refugees, Conversions and the Latin Diocese of Jerusalem* 1946–1956, Leiden: The Netherlands: Brill, 2020, 213-255.

[339] In addition, there is an emerging movement of "Aramaean Christianity" that seeks a Christian-Israeli nationalism. A very small movement which has been utilized by the Isareli Government who have offered Israeli Arabs the possibility of registering as Aramean, a recognized ethnicity within Israel. This has been criticized by the Catholic Bishops in the Holy Land as an attempt to divide Israeli Arabs from Palestinians in the West Bank. See http://www. fides. org/en/news/36384-ASIA_HOLY_LAND_The_Catholic_Bishops_the_recognition_of_the_Aramean_nationality_aims_to_divide_the_Palestinian_Christians_from_others. (accessed 15/01/2023) See also Farah, Rima. "The Rise of a Christian Aramaic Nationality in Modern Israel. " *Israel Studies* (Bloomington) 26. 2 (2021): 1–28.

[340] Neuhaus, *Writing*, p. 202ff.

from the earliest times of the Society to the present day (including the wars in Iraq and Syria).[341]

(iii) A Thinker in Motion

It is because Neuhaus' work is deeply rooted in his faith journey and his pastoral ministry that we might characterize him as a "thinker in motion".

It is out of that lived experience that Neuhaus explores the challenge for Christians in the Middle East that is how to engage in dialogue with Jews, within the distinctive context where Islam is an important player. This is arguably most acute for Catholics in the Holy Land given the importance of *Nostra Aetate* from the period of the Second Vatican Council onwards. And perhaps it is in this context that this most intense reflection upon the Christian dialogical vocation is being undertaken. Prominent in this enquiry is Neuhaus, Patriarch Michel Sabbah and Fr Jamal Khader.[342] They seek to honour the intent of *Nostra Aetate* in recognizing the particularity of Judaism's relationship to the church whilst also seeking to find a Holy Land context for a faithful reading of *Nostra Aetate*.

The crucial words from *Nostra Aetate*:

> God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues-such is the

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[341] Anthony O'Mahony, "Eastern Christianity and Jesuit Scholarship in Arabic and Islam: Modern History and Contemporary Theological Reflections", in Anna Abram, Peter Gallagher and Michael Kirwan (eds), *Philosophy, Theology and the Jesuit Tradition "the eye of love"*, Bloomsbury, TandT Clark 2017, pp. 159–272.

[342] See Michel Sabbah (Drew Christiansen and Saliba Sarsar, eds), *Faithful Witness: On Reconciliation and Peace in the Holy Land*, New York: New York City Press, 2009; Jamal Khader, "Christian Jewish Dialogue in Palestine/Israel: A Different Dialogue", in Rafiq Khoury and Rainer Zimmer-Winkel (eds), *Christian Theology in the Palestinian Context*, Berlin: AphorismA, 2019.

> witness of the Apostle.(11) In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3:9).(12)

Even though *Nostra Aetate* is a concise document, its theological and ecclesial implications have been far reaching. [343] Opinions may differ as to what it represents, whether it be "a conversion to the 'providential mystery of otherness' for the life of the church, and as a call to extend and deepen the conversation"[344] or a development consistent with the historic teaching of the church.[345] Yet it is unmistakable that *Nostra Aetate* ushered in an era of theological discourse around what it means to say that "God does not repent of the gifts" in respect of Judaism.[346] and what the ecclesial outworkings might be of the earlier comment in *Nostra Aetate* that "The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems." It is important to note that it was the voice of Eastern Catholics from the Middle East at early stage that were to influence the Second Vatican Council looking beyond the Judeo-Christian encounter to

[343] *Nostra Aetate* has generated a huge corpus of written material concerning the direction of inter-religious relations and the Catholic Church. A range of Catholic perspectives can be found in Joseph Di Noia, *The Diversity of Religions: A Christian Perspective*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1992; Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, New York: Orbis Books 1997; Michael Barnes, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; Michael Fitzgerald and John Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View*, London: SPCK 2006; Gavin d'Costa, *Vatican II: Catholic Doctrines on Jews and Muslims*, Oxford: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

[344] Mary C. Boys, SNJM: "What *Nostra Aetate* Inaugurated: A Conversion to the "Providential Mystery of Otherness", *Theological Studies* 74 (2013), pp. 73–104.

[345] This is argued by, amongst others, Gavin d'Costa who attempts to place the documents of Second Vatican Council in their historical context, detached from some of the layers of subsequent interpretation. See G. d'Costa, *Vatican II: Catholic Doctrines on the Jews and Muslim*s, Oxford, 2014.

[346] See John Pawlikowski OSM, "Catholic–Jewish Relations in Light of Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate*: A New Era", in Catherine E. Clifford, and Massimo Faggioli (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Vatican II* (2023), https://doi. org/10. 1093/oxfordhb/9780198813903. 013. 39.

Islam (as we have already noted, the primary religious other in the Middle East) and other faiths too.

Neuhaus and Khader, writing in 2006, make several observations on *Nostra Aetate* for a Holy Land context that are worth dwelling on. They note that Pope John Paul II spoke of “dialogue as the new name of love” and thus for Christians in the Holy Land there is a vocation to dialogue and coexistence with an openness to dialogue being an important way in which the church manifests love in the world.[347] Christianity however lives with its own fragility in the Holy Land, it being the only place in the world where Christians live in a context of Jewish and Islamic dominance, and this is a distinctive contribution that the church in the Holy Land offers to the wider Catholic church. Yet there is more to this distinctiveness than merely inter-religious dialogue. Holy Land Christianity is characterized by a diversity unrivalled elsewhere: an ancient and contemporary presence of Eastern Christian traditions, Christian churches (particularly Protestant) in Jerusalem, churches with a more Western outlook and Catholics of Jewish heritage that often worship in Hebrew. So how are the imperatives of *Nostra Aetate* to be honoured in a Holy Land context with the dual call to acknowledge that God does not repent of his gifts (to the Jews) and the church holding Muslims with esteem?[348] Neuhaus and Khader identify a number aspects that render an Eastern approach to inter-religious engagement, and particular as it relates to

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[347] Jamal Khader and David Neuhaus SJ, “A Holy Land Context for *Nostra Aetate*”, *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations: A Peer-reviewed e-journal of the Council of Centers in Jewish-Christian Relations*, Volume I (2005–6), 67–68.
[348] In numerous Western readings of *Nostra Aetate* there is a hierarchy in inter-religious dialogue, with Jews established as the closest relationship thus pre-eminent over Islam. A Middle eastern reading of *Nostra Aetate* may indeed over different interpretations. There is, perhaps, a subtle re-ordering of these missional priorities.

Judaism.[349] The first and critical aspect of this is the crucial importance of Islam, and how for Christians of the Holy Land, Islam is the primary religious other due to shared culture and language. This is not to ignore the contemporary challenges that exist and Neuhaus and Khader, in the company of many other Palestinian writers, including Ateek, Raheb and Younan, note the difficulties that are presented by Islamization by more radical groups that are as much a challenge to other Muslims as they are to Christians.

Indeed, in Chapter 3 we explored the profoundly Arabic context of Palestinian Christianity and of the cultural and religious ambiguity that this presents as well as the benefits for close kinship with their religious neighbour.

The next point they make is that *Nostra Aetate* invites Christians to learn about Judaism as it is lived by Jews today. Yet the contexts of the West (where Jews live in diaspora) and the Middle East (where Israeli Jews are often viewed as occupiers) could not be more different and the perspectives between these two contexts need to be clearly delineated between Europe and Jerusalem. There are two points to emphasise here: the first is that the Holocaust is not viewed as being part of the Middle Eastern story[350] and Middle Eastern Christians maintain that their heritage and history are not tainted by the long tradition of antisemitism, and secondly Christians of the Holy Land are defined to a significant extent by the *Nakba* and therefore the emphasis is upon practical relationships built on a common search for truth,

[349] Op. cit.
[350] But note also the documented contact between the Nazi high command and Arab leaders in the 1930s and 1940s: Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010; Robert Satloff, *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands*, New York: Public Affairs, 2006.

peace and justice and an acknowledgement that the Occupation is an obstacle to the Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Finally, there is the question of the collision between the languages of politics and theology. In Christian theology (and Jewish religious thought), “Israel” is a sign of God’s election. Yet the modern state of Israel, taking as it does the ancient name “Israel” that was given to Jacob (“he who wrestles”[351]) raises up a crisis where the political has plundered the theological. Furthermore, the church is the new Israel, in traditional Catholic theology, and whilst that in itself is a problem if one seeks to address difficulties of replacement theology, it is problematic in other ways that relate to the Judeo-Christian understanding of Israel as a sign of God’s election. There will always be ethical questions related to nation states—how they act towards their citizens, especially the most vulnerable, but also their relationships to their neighbours. In that sense Israel is no different to any of its neighbours, yet it is different by virtue of its adoption of the name associated with divine election. This therefore poses a difficulty for Christians in dialogue with Jews in the Holy Land—how can one speak of Israel without political or theological ambiguity?

One of the ways in which Neuhaus and Khader address this question is Israel as a political reality not an extension of Biblical Israel.[352] But to what extent does the name “Israel” place this nation state in a particular theological place that is unique? It may be slightly overstating things to claim that the choosing of the name “Israel” for the new Jewish State was a radical reclaiming of

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[351] Genesis 32. 28. The Hebrew word for Israel has numerous translations, including “God contended”, “Wrestles with God” and “Triumphant with God”.
[352] Jamal Khader and David Neuhaus SJ, “A Holy Land Context for *Nostra Aetate*”, pp. 67–88.

Jewish nomenclature from the overbearing and genocidal Christian Europe, but nevertheless there is the theological conundrum for Christianity—Can its ecclesial understanding co-exist in this land of ancient belonging with Zionist self-understanding?

The relationship between the Catholic Church and the State of Israel is a complex one and relates essentially to two areas of concern—matters theological and diplomatic. The political status of the Vatican as a nation state, with the Pope as the juridical head, has complicated the relationship of the church to the Jewish people once the State of Israel came to be the physical and temporal fulfilment of Jewish longing, freed from the sentence of perpetual wandering, passed centuries ago by Western Christendom, for the crime of deicide. The details of the tortuous developments of the Vatican's relationship to the State of Israel need not detain us here except to make the observation that the difficulty for the Holy See in relationship to Israel has always been to avoid the precedent of endorsing any form of nationalism, especially religious nationalism, while needing to continue the journey of theological rapprochement with the Jewish people set in train by the Second Vatican Council. [353] Alongside this is the status of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem and elsewhere: an historical concern dating back to Ottoman times which would invariably entangle the church with political matters and explains the apparent acquiescence of the church with the British Mandate, a Protestant power but Christian nonetheless. And finally, there is the pastoral concern for the Catholic communities of the region: as George Emile Irani suggests, the

[353] George Emile Irani, *The Papacy and the Middle East: The Role of the Holy See in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1962–1984*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986; Gavin d'Costa, *Catholic Doctrines on the Jewish People after Vatican II*, Oxford, 2019, pp. 105–143.

instinct always to seek protection wherever Catholic communities are to be found, observing:

> In the Levant, the Papacy represents a faith, the Catholic faith, whereas Judaism and Islam embody both religion and nationalism. This difference is at the root of misunderstandings that hinder the Holy See in its activities in this area.[354]

Anthony O'Mahony has suggested an approach to understanding the relationship of the Holy See to the Holy Land by dividing it into three historical periods: [1] a concern for Catholic communities in the Holy Land and attention to holy places (1897–1947); [2] access of the three monotheistic faiths to their respective holy places (1947–1964); [3] access to holy sites for all and the emphasis on Jerusalem and its global significance (1947-present). This is fundamental to a fuller appreciation of the context of Jewish-Christian relations in the Holy Land, alongside *Nostra Aetate* and ensuing documents that are concerned with questions of dialogue.[355]

Much of the focus amongst those discussing Catholic-Jewish relations in a post-Shoah world has been on *Nostra Aetate*, how it is to be applied and taken forward. As we shall see, Neuhaus gives considerable attention to this. However, what is often overlooked is the relationship of the Vatican to the modern State of Israel, in particular the recognition of the State of Israel and related diplomatic issues. The approach can be viewed as being transnational in character[356] as their approach to the Holy Land is not just concerned with

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[354] Irani, op. cit., pp. 3.
[355] Anthony O'Mahony, "The Vatican, Jerusalem, the State of Israel, and Christianity in the Holy Land", *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, Vol. 5, No. 2, July 2005, pp. 123–146.
[356] See Irani, op. cit, p. 9ff.

the internal concerns of the Holy Land, particularly Jerusalem, but the wider implications across the Middle East and across the Mediterranean region which include significant Muslim populations in these European countries, as well as Christian presence in majority Muslim nations. This helps to explain at least in part, the reason for the Vatican's preference for the internationalisation of Jerusalem in previous decades. Thus, as Anthony O'Mahony suggests, the Vatican's approach to the Holy Land developed from a straightforward consideration for Catholic communities and the safeguarding of holy places to a more nuanced concern for the wider interreligious implications resulting from geopolitical developments. This is the context for the Vatican's apparent ambivalent attitude towards the State of Israel that has sometimes been a stumbling block in Catholic Jewish dialogue.[357]

Viewed together, the diplomatic trajectory and the post-Vatican II documents (and it should be noted that diplomatic considerations predate *Nostra Aetate* by 20 years or more) offer a much fuller account of the recent trends in Jewish-Catholic relations, particularly given the shifts in the self-understanding of most Jews away from Europe to the centrality of the modern State of Israel as the means by which Jews define their place in the contemporary world. It is into this context that Fr David Neuhaus offers his own perspective as a Catholic theologian who is a citizen of the State of Israel and the first matter under consideration is whether in a post-*Nostra Aetate*

[357] And in the wider ecumenical context the State of Israel remains a significant challenge in Jewish-Christian Relations. See Daniel F. Polish: "A Jewish Perspective on the Work of the World Council of Churches in Jewish-Christian Relations", *Current Dialogue*, Vol. 73. No 5, December 2021, pp. 786–794.

context, the Church holds to the abiding nature of the Jewish covenant, that God does not "repent of the gifts" bestowed on the Jewish people.

4.3. From Contempt to Respect: Nostra Aetate in Historical and Ecclesial Context

The "Teaching of Contempt"—that belief in the Western Church that the Jews are forever stained and condemned for their rejection of Christ—was the main characteristic of the Western Church's attitudes to Jews in Europe and against which *Nostra Aetate* turned its face.

Neuhaus' observation that pre-Vatican II Catholicism would have associated Jews with darkness, rebellion and sin is an important reminder of the theological and sociological reality of the Jewish place within Christian Europe.[358] Thus the pre-Conciliar Church viewed the Jew in different terms to the post-Conciliar Church? He observes that the "teaching of contempt" has been replaced by a "teaching of respect" and arguably this has freed the Church to oppose more strongly manifestations of political antisemitism.[359]

Nevertheless, there are important considerations as to why this has been the case. Kenneth Cragg asks a probing question:

> Are we left, in the end, with the shattering irony that history's most intense sense of corporate religious destiny and its bitterest crime of

[358] It has been suggested that the "teaching of contempt" amounts to a Freudian Oedipal compulsion to patricide—if Judaism is viewed as the parent religion to Christianity. See for example Leon Sheleff, *In the Shadow of the Cross: Jewish-Christian Relations Through the Ages*, London and Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004, pp. 206–224.
[359] David Mark Neuhaus: "Harvest and Horizons: An Appraisal of *Nostra Aetate* Para. 4", in K. C. Ellis (ed), *Nostra Aetate*, *Non-Christian Religions and Interfaith Relations*, Palgrave MacMillan 2021, pp.67-87

> rejection go together? Why has *this* election experienced *this* enmity? Why is it that Jewry has somehow become the butt of the deepest revelations of human perversity and Jewish existence somehow the touchstone of human antipathies? Is it that humanity cannot "allow" so confidently "elected" a people? How is it that being a people on behalf of God has meant, so largely, being a people in spite of men? And what, through all the vexing tangle of these questions, becomes of the goal for which election stood, or stands?[360]

This perceptive observation from Cragg rightly links the "teaching of contempt" with questions of election and salvation. The "teaching of contempt" carried with it a presumption that the Jew was condemned unless he repented and were baptized.

Neuhaus approaches a theological understanding of the Jewish people as a Catholic of Jewish heritage who is attempting to frame the post-Vatican II teaching of the church with a Middle Eastern context. And thus, we might observe that the trajectory of his thought begins with the Catholic church's emphasis upon the familial relationship between the church and the Jews which is also closely aligned with the Jewishness of Jesus. Neuhaus' starting point is always with scripture as this was the starting point for his own priestly vocation and his handling of the Biblical material is carefully crafted. He notes for instance that Pope Benedict does not regard the cries of the Jews for Jesus' death in Matthew's Gospel to be an historical fact. And when it comes to a key element of replacement theology in hermeneutics he observes:

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[360] Cragg, *The Privilege of Man*, London: Althone Press 1967, p. 95

> The Christian reader might perceive Christ in the Old Testament, but not because he is objectively there. Rather, he becomes perceptible in reading the Old in the light of the New … [361]

This is an importance nuancing of a hermeneutical problem in addressing replacement theology: the tendency is to dispense entirely with any Christian theological reading of the Old Testament and treat it entirely as a Jewish text, yet this runs the risk of becoming a kind of sub-Marcion theology that downplays the importance of the Old Testament in its witness to the Christ of faith.

This is also manifested in liturgical reform where the language of the Good Friday liturgy has dispensed with images of the Jews as “blinded” and having their hearts “veiled” from the truth to a new language of growing in faithfulness to the Covenant.[362] This, says Neuhaus, is the most vivid example of the change in direction of the church’s teaching in relation to the Jews.[363] This naturally flows into the importance of repentance for the anti-Judaic teaching of contempt which had characterized the teaching of the church until the advent of *Nostra Aetate*. This ecclesial metanoia he illustrates by the actions of Pope John Paul II at the Western Wall in 2000.[364]

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[361] David Mark Neuhaus, “Harvest and Horizons: An Appraisal of *Nostra Aetate* Para. 4”, in K. C. Ellis (ed.), *Nostra Aetate, Non-Christian Religions, and Interfaith Relations*, 2021, pp. 67–87.

[362] A number of Protestant Churches have followed this liturgical approach, as can be seen in the liturgies from the Presbyterian Church USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church USA, Anglican Church in New Zealand, the Church of England and the Church of Scotland.

[363] Ibid., p. 72.

[364] Ibid., p. 70.

4.4 Salvation and Covenant

Nostra Aetate's declaration that God does not repent of the gifts he offers and the debate since, regarding what it means regarding the Jewish covenant as irrevocable are part of the theological context that intertwine questions of land, political self-determination, and justice on the one hand, and the theological considerations regarding salvation and covenant on the other. This, Neuhaus points out is a profoundly Christian question, whereas Jews have an entirely different language, that of "election".[365]

Is salvation contingent upon the acceptance of the Messiahship of Jesus, or are Jews saved by their faithfulness to the Covenant given through Abraham? And if the latter is the case what is the relationship between what Christianity refers to as "the New Covenant" and the older Covenant with the Jews? These matters have been a central part of the theological discourse around Jewish-Christian relations in the 20th century, but the questions are much older than those posed within the inter-religious encounter, and stretch back to the ancient Church, even if these questions were posed in a very different form. David Neuhaus observes that, within Catholic theology, there has been a marked difference in the ecclesial discourse concerning the Jews from the Second Vatican Council onwards.

However, in considering Vatican II this matter of the necessity of Jewish conversion and baptism needs careful re-evaluation. If previously the Jews had lived as though in a "cloud of darkness and disbelief" and their only means of salvation was conversion, then ought not the logic of *Nostra Aetate*

[365] David Neuhaus SS, "Salvation and the Jews", *La Civiltà Cattolica*, En. Ed. Vol. 5, No. 5 art. 11, 0521: 10. 32009/22072446.0521.11.

lead inevitably to the conclusion that if God does not repent of his gifts, then surely the Jews are not in "darkness" and conversion is not required? Much debate around Catholic-Jewish relations since *Nostra Aetate* has turned around this question.[366] And so, should the Church proclaim the Gospel to the Jews or should Judaism be understood as a parallel means towards salvation? This is not a new question, for Jews as well as Christians. Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), for instance, wrestled with this question in his seminal work *The Star of Redemption* which spoke of the parallel and complementary aspects of the two faiths, with Judaism as the burning core of the star with the rays emanating forth as Christianity, the Church in the world. He understood the relationship as a complementary and even a symbiotic relationship that was essential for both traditions until a full eschatological reconciliation.[367] His thinking is due to a significant degree to his own spiritual journey to the brink of conversation to Christianity but finding a renewed Jewish faith on the eve of the First World War during the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.[368]

For Catholic theology this question hinges on *Nostra Aetate*'s assertion that the Gospel of salvation sprang from the Jewish people, that God "holds the Jews most dear (and) does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues—such is the witness of the Apostle".

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[366] Similarly, the Church of England's Faith and Order Commission report touches on this theme: *God's Unfailing Word: Theological and Practical Perspectives on Christian-Jewish Relations*, London: Church House Publishing, 2019, pp. 23–48.
[367] See further, Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970 edition; Michael Barnes, *Traces of the Other*, Chennai, 2000; David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification*, Oxford, 1989.
[368] See further, Michael Barnes, *Interreligious Learning: Dialogue, Spirituality and the Christian Imagination*, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 95ff.

This question appears in different places within Neuhaus' work. An important issue in this regard is shared scripture, and this can be viewed as *praeparatio eschatologica* rather than *praeparatio evangelica*. He quotes Walter Kaspar in support of this, who emphasized that Jews do not need to become Christians to be saved, but rather continue in faithfulness to God's commands.[369]

However, it is Neuhaus' article on the events of 2009, where these questions are placed within the wider geo-political context.[370] The fundamental question that is posed is whether during the Papacy of Benedict XVI there was a rowing back from the Second Vatican Council towards a conservative retrenchment. In relation to the specific issue of the Jewish people and salvation this becomes a live issue for Neuhaus when these developments are read in the light of the declaration of Pope John Paul II, that the covenant with the Jews is not revoked.[371] John Paul II's assertion was widely understood by Jews (and many Catholics) at the time as meaning that there is no requirement to convert to Christianity in order to attain salvation. David Novak for instance, states that Christians should believe that the Jewish covenant is not replaced, but merely supplemented by Christianity, implying that Christianity is the covenant of the Gentiles.[372]

However, during the Benedict Papacy the theological implications of this came to be teased out when the Bishops' Conferences in Germany and the

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[369] Neuhaus, *Writing from the Holy Land*, pp. 155ff. It should be also noted that Walter Kaspar has spoken on Judaism as a "sacrament of otherness", Address on the 37th Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, October 28th 2002.
[370] "Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009", *One In Christ*, volume 43/2 (2009).
[371] John McDade, "The Continuing Validity of the Jewish Covenant: A Christian Perspective" and Francesco Rossi de Gasperis: "Two Testaments—One Covenant", *The Month, February 2000.*
[372] David Novak, *Zionism and Judaism*, Cambridge 2015, p. 143f.

USA clarified the Church's teaching on the Jews and salvation. The Central Committee of German Catholics in 2009, followed the similar US Jewish-Catholic document of 2002 ("Reflections on Covenant and Mission") which argued that missions to the Jews was an abrogation of the Jewish covenant. The German bishops, however, took the view that this was tantamount to a denial of the universality of the Gospel. Similarly, the Catholic bishops in the United States did not rule out evangelization of the Jewish people but argued that it will "take an utterly unique form, precisely because God has already established a particular relationship with the Jewish people."[373]

Neuhaus notes both the nuancing and clarifying nature of this comment. Furthermore, Jewish understandings of divine revelation are always incomplete. So, whilst God does not change his mind regarding the Covenant with the Jewish people—for this would render God capricious—the Church also believes that the fulfilment of the Covenant is only found in Jesus Christ. However, dialogue must never be used as a means of proselytism and whilst this assertion is welcomed by Jews, Neuhaus notes the persistent tension within Jewish-Christian relations, namely that Catholics come into dialogue with a conviction that Jew and Gentile alike are saved by Jesus Christ.[374]

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[373] Neuhaus, *One in Christ*, pp. 15ff; for further discussion on the relationship between the Jewish Covenant and Christianity, see John T. Pawlikowski: "The Search for a New Paradigm for the Jewish-Christian Relationship: A Response to Michael Signer", in J. T. Pawlikowski and Hayim Goren Perelmuter, *Reinterpreting Revelation and Tradition: Jews and Christians in* Conversation, Franklin: Sheed and Ward, 2000. See also Pawlikowski, "Vatican II on the Jews: A Dramatic Example of Theological Development", presented to the 1999 Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Miami; Eugene J. Fisher: "The Evolution of a Tradition: From *Nostra Aetate* to the 'Notes'", in *Fifteen Years of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue 1970–1985*, Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988; Elliot N. Dorff, "The Covenant as the Key: A Jewish Theology of Jewish-Christian Relations" in Leon Klenicki (ed), *Toward a Theological Encounter of* Christianity, New York: Paulist Press 1991, pp. 43–66; Edward Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian* Relations, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 170–190.
[374] Neuhaus, "Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009", *One In Christ*, volume 43/2 (2009), p. 17.

For Neuhaus an important question is whether these developments on matters of covenant reflect a conservative retrenchment under the Benedict papacy? Neuhaus prefers the view that this is merely the outworking of the theological implications of *Nostra Aetate* and what it means to assert that the Covenant with the Jews is not revoked. Gavin d'Costa argues that the Second Vatican Council did not rule out mission to Jews but implicitly endorsed it whilst ruling out coercion and the targeting of one faith over another. [375] Furthermore, d'Costa argues that the claims that the Vatican Council endorsed the view that Judaism is a means of salvation, that Judaism is a valid God given covenant and that missions to the Jews are illegitimate, are tendentious as they do not appear in the documents of the Council. Doctrines, however, do develop and this is reflected in Neuhaus's treatment of the developments regarding salvation during the Benedict papacy.[376]

The question of salvation is closely related to the issue of covenant, referred to earlier. Jürgen Moltmann articulates the theological question thus:

> Does the divine history of Israel merge into church history in such a way that Israel, as 'the ancient people have God", has been superseded and rendered obsolete by "the new people of God"? Or does Israel retain its own particular "vocation for salvation" side by side with the church down to the end of history?[377]

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[375] "Mission" is here understood as arising from the universal reach of the Catholic Church, that the Gospel is for all peoples, including the Jews. See d'Costa, *Catholic Doctrines on the Jewish People after Vatican II,* pp. 144–187.
[376] Gavin d'Costa, *Vatican II: Catholic Doctrines on Jews and Muslims*, Oxford, 2014, pp. 113–159.
[377] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, London: SCM Press, 1977, p. 137. Moltmann is one of the earliest theologians to note the significance of the church's self-understanding as Israel, the existence of the State of Israel as a key shift in Jewish-Christian dialogue, pp. 136ff.

There have been various attempts to harmonize the Jewish covenant with the covenant of the New Testament. Pope John Paul II has spoken on this theme more than any pope before or since: in 1980 for instance, at a meeting with the Jewish community in Mainz he stated, "God's people of the Old Covenant which has never been revoked."[378] Other theologians have attempted to express a theological recognition of the ongoing validity of the Jewish covenant. This has included Monika Hellwig who speaks of Christ opening the door that enables Gentiles to encounter the God of Abraham; Paul van Buren, who had argued that Christianity had eradicated Jewish elements from its theology in replacing it with a pagan-Christian tradition, culminating in the Holocaust; Christianity it is suggested should return to Judaism and see the two traditions as branches of a single covenant. For Hellwig the issue, however, is not so much whether one adopts a one or two covenant model but whether Judaism has been superseded by Christianity or whether Judaism has a continuing validity.[379]

An important figure within these theological debates is Anglican scholar James Parkes who suggested a "two covenants" approach whereby the New Testament becomes the Covenant to the Gentiles. [380] This echoes much of what Rosenzweig was seeking to advance, and his work is important to note

[378] John McDade, "The Continuing Validity of the Jewish Covenant: A Christian Perspective", and Francesco Rossi de Gasperis, "Two Testaments—One Covenant", *The Month,* February 2000).
[379] John T. Pawlikowski, "The Search for a New Paradigm for the Jewish-Christian Relationship: A Response to Michael Signer", in J. T. Pawlikowski and Hayim Goren Perelmuter, *Reinterpreting Revelation and Tradition: Jews and Christians in Conversation*, Franklin: Sheed and Ward, 2000.
[380] James Parkes (1896–1981) was an Anglican priest and scholar of the Jewish-Christian Encounter. In 1929 he published "The Jew and His Neighbour" arguing for a radical theological reappraisal by Christian Theology of the understanding of the Jewish People. He was a groundbreaking scholar with Anglicanism and his extensive papers are held by the Parkes Institute at the University of Southampton.

as it is indicative of the wider trajectory of Christian theological consideration of Judaism in the middle decades of the 20th century. Close to Parkes' position are the advocates of the "double covenant" model which have included Clemens Thoma and Franz Mussner amongst others.[381] Thoma and Mussner attempt to locate the significance of Jesus within a double covenant model that acknowledges the continuing validity of the Jewish covenant and the distinctiveness of Christianity. Thoma roots his understanding firmly in scripture, rejected any notion that there was any Biblical tension between understandings of Israel and Church, given that there was so much diversity in understanding at the time. Jesus, says Thoma, placed his own ministry within the context of the Kingdom of God, something entirely consistent with traditions of Jewish apocalyptic. Mussner too locates the ministry of Jesus within the divine economy but also stressing the Doctrine of the Incarnation as fulfilment of messianic prophecy that is essentially Jewish in its roots.[382]

The Roman Catholic scholar of the Jewish-Christian encounter John Pawlikowski himself prefers a "double covenant" approach as this tends to hold in respect the distinctiveness of each religion. [383] He suggests that whilst the single covenant approach has appeal in stressing the closeness of the two traditions, it doesn't adequately stress the uniqueness of the Christ event: "Christianity has something distinctive to offer to the covenantal partnership

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[381] John Pawlikowski characterizes them as "double covenant" although he acknowledges that they themselves do not use the term of themselves.
[382] Ibid.
[383] John T. Pawlikowaki (b. 1940) is an American Servite Priest who has served on the teaching staff of the Catholic Theological Union, Chicago and has been active in Catholic-Jewish Dialogue at an academic and practitioner level, including Holocaust education. He has written widely on Jewish-Christian relations.

with Jews."[384] Indeed it would need further clarification on the functionality of the Atonement if it were only about expanding covenantal relationship to the Gentiles. This is where Jewish-Christian dialogue can get itself into theological difficulty and Kenneth Cragg has some important objections here which he expresses in relation to his fellow Anglican contemporary, James Parkes, namely that Parkes has diminished the Gospel promises to humanity and not just the Gentiles. Cragg, whilst at one with Parkes in recognizing and addressing the difficulties between Jews and Christians, profoundly disagrees with his "two covenants" approach:

> He was right, on every count, to deplore and reject the familiar thesis of the supersession of the Judaic, to insist on taking to heart the Judaic reasons for non-participation (after the first stages) in the Christian thing. But in doing so, he adopted a thesis—since his time widely approved—which virtually surrendered the reasons for the Christian decision. He disaffiliated from the apostles and their Scriptures by seeing Jewry as not intended within the meaning of the Cross and therefore uniquely excluded from the intentions of a grace alleged to be universal.[385]

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[384] John T. Pawlikowski, "The Search for a New Paradigm for the Jewish-Christian Relationship: A Response to Michael Signer", in J. T. Pawlikowski and Hayim Goren Perelmuter, *Reinterpreting Revelation and Tradition: Jews and Christians in Conversation*. Franklin: Sheed and Ward, 2000. See also Pawlikowski, "Vatican II on the Jews: A Dramatic Example of Theological Development", Presented to the 1999 Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Miami, Florida; Eugene J. Fisher, "The Evolution of a Tradition: From *Nostra Aetate* to the 'Notes'", in *Fifteen Years of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue 1970–1985*, Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988; Elliot N. Dorff, "The Covenant as the Key: A Jewish Theology of Jewish-Christian Relations" in Leon Klenicki (ed), *Toward a Theological Encounter of Christianity*. New York: Paulist Press 1991, pp. 43–66; Edward Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*. Cambridge, 2010, pp. 170–190.

[385] Kenneth Cragg, *Troubled by Truth: Biographies in the Presence of Mystery*, Durham, 1992, p. 91f.

He suggests that Parkes, and those that have subsequently followed his line of argument, have rewritten the New Testament and the Creeds to suggest that Christ's salvific acts are directed only towards Gentiles and not the Jews. Meanwhile Christianity is born out of an abandonment of this religious exceptionalism, but not to become a more open form of Judaism but a new community, the Church, which incorporates Jewish understandings of Covenant:

> (The New Testament) declared in the same breath in which is said "there is neither male nor female". This makes it clear that Jewry was in no way being excluded or invited into demise. Clearly the Church was no sexless society like a community of snails. Male and female blessedly persisted. The point of saying "there is neither male nor female" is that in respect of the fellowship the distinction, still in being, has no significance. Likewise, with "Jew" and "Gentile" … Both were equally called into a bond with God and between themselves in which all their continuing identity would find a unity.[386]

These questions take on a different kind of significance if, as we have argued, there has been an easterly tilt in the Jewish-Christian encounter. This is found in the reality that Judaism is now largely defined through Zionist fulfilment in the Land. In many ways, Zionism is how Jews find their place and salvation in the world. But this understanding of Jewish salvation through Zionist intentionality has never quite shaken off the charge that it was a negation of the divine, a salvation by human hand. Nevertheless, the creation of the State

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[386] Kenneth Cragg, *The Christ and the Faiths: Theology in Cross-Reference*, London: SPCK 1986, p. 128f.

of Israel in 1948 (and its military successes, most notably in 1967) were viewed by many Jews as evidence of the saving hand of God. The “stepping back into history” that Zionism represented was a departure from the quietist tone of Judaism hitherto. And we noted in an earlier chapter, Rabbi David Hartman has pointed to the way in which Zionism, through a return to history, resists spiritual abstractions and obstructs the ideas of replacement or redundancy as expressed through Christian and Islamic universalisms.[387]

Zionism is also a rejection of the spiritual and rabbinic quietism of historical characterization where the Messianic age is something to be patiently awaited in the fullness of time. Zionism however turns this Messianic longing into actualized in political liberation and statehood. This represents a pronounced theological challenge both to how Christianity understands and relates to Judaism, but also in terms of matters of theological language concerning “salvation”, “Israel”, “Zion” and also matters of eschatology given the implicit abrogation of eschatology that many schools of Zionist thought represent. It is Zionism’s blending of religion and nationalism, and of its absorption of the religious into the political that represents one of the most significant, though often under-acknowledged, challenges for Jewish-Christian dialogue, especially if Neuhaus’ starting point, that Christians must engage with Jews as they see themselves, is to be fully taken on board. To put this point differently, we might say that the “teaching of contempt” has had a theological and a political price to pay.

[387] David Hartman, *A Living Covenant*, p. 304.

4.5 The Holy Land Context of the Jewish-Christian Encounter

(i) The Muslim World of the Middle East

Palestinian Christians have often been characterized as being "caught between", between a dominant Islamic polity and the more recent Zionist State.[388] This places Holy Land Christianity in a unique place globally, existing in both contexts, yet limited in terms of their ability to determine their own destiny. Thus, any enquiry that seeks to understand the implications for the easterly tilt in Jewish-Christian dialogue needs to apprehend the character of Holy Land Christianity's inter-religious encounter.

Sidney Griffith has carefully explored the place of Arabic translations of the Bible that emerged well into the late medieval period and how this reflects the extent to which Christianity (and Judaism) was deeply embedded in the Arabic-Islamic culture. The Qur'an is described as "the first Arabic book" and thus subsequent translations into Arabic of the Bible might be regarded as a reaction to the growing supremacy of Islam but even the Islamic polemics against what they saw as the misuse of Arabic by Jews and Christians, only serves to emphasise how closely intertwined these three monotheistic faiths were in this period and further deepens our understanding of what is meant when Islam speaks of Jews and Christians as "people of the book".[389]

The strong sense held by Palestinian theologians that it has a closeness to Muslims and therefore a vocation to dialogical encounter is a particular feature of the context of Holy Land Christianity. As we have seen, there is an

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[388] See for example, Riah Abu al-Assal, *Caught in Between: The Extraordinary Story of an Arab Palestinian Christian Israeli*, London: SPCK, 1999.
[389] Sidney Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the Language of Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

emphasis upon an umbilical nature of Christianity's relationship to Islam by suggesting that the Qur'an is the Bible enculturated into Arab culture and context. All of this raises important questions—how Western Christian theology should engage with Palestinian Christian thought in all its diversity, and how engagement with Jews and Muslims is impacted. When the European Christian account of itself is rooted in its relationship with Judaism, both in terms of its theological rootedness and its often-hostile relationship, whilst in the Middle East Christianity has an intimate, albeit complex, relationship to the dominant Islamic Arabic culture.

An important characteristic of this context is the implicit anti-Judaism that exists in Arabic discourse that has been amplified since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and radical changes in the plural context of many Middle Eastern societies. This is acknowledged by David Neuhaus and whilst it is often suggested that this due to Arabic being the common factor, such a narrative is also found in non-Arabic speaking societies such as Turkey and Iran, and therefore Neuhaus concludes, this anti-Judaic discourse is forged out of Islam rather than Arabic. And we might further note that in terms of classical Islam, Jews were the primary religious other, something that came to be a significant theme in the work of influential Islamist thinkers of the mid-20th century including, and especially, Sayyid Qutb.[390] Yet this point deserves further nuancing: the history of the Jewish-Muslim encounter in the Middle East and North Africa is much more than mere mutual antagonism, with

[390] See further: Ronald L. Nettler, *Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations*, Oxford, 1995; Neil Robinson, "Sayyid Qutb's Attitude to Christianity: Sura 9. 29–35 in Fi Zilal Al-Quran", in LloydvRidgeon, *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, London: Macmillan 2001, p. 5.

Jewish communities flourishing in Arab-speaking society in terms of commerce and culture. Bernard Lewis, the British born orientalist scholar, argues that the Jewish-Islamic tradition is at least equal to the Judeo-Christian tradition, if not of greater importance.[391]

Given the way in which Holy Land Christianity is therefore caught up in the religious nationalisms of the Middle East, the Jewish-Christian encounter finds its itself increasingly framed by global geo-political matters amidst questions of land, as the theological and the geo-political intersect.

(ii) The Jewish Character of Israel

As we have already noted, Israel is central to Jewish self-understanding, even for Jews who do not reside there.[392] For the majority it is still central to how they view their place in the world. Therefore, dialogue with Jews will inevitably come back to Christian perceptions of Israel. This is a matter that Neuhaus seeks to address and asks, "does the State of Israel take on theological significance within the dialogue with Jews? How does the modern State of Israel relate, if at all, to the Bible? Concomitantly what should the position of the Church be in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, a part of whom are Catholics?"

A consistent complaint from Jewish dialogue partners is that the Catholic Church has been reticent in recognizing Israel as integral to Jewish identity. Neuhaus identifies four reasons why this has been the case. The first of these

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[391] Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
[392] Eugene Korn, *The Jewish Connection to Israel, the Promised Land: A Brief Introduction for Christians*, Nashville: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008; Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009.

is a wariness of theologizing the political which brings with it some of the dangers that are associated with fundamentalist movements.[393] The second reason concerns the ongoing conflict in the region—unresolved issues relating to Palestinian refugees and Palestinian nationhood, Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the building of settlements and land seizures which have all impacted negatively upon Palestinians, including Catholics as well as Eastern Orthodox and other Christian communities. Thirdly there is the matter of different readings of the Biblical land. Catholics and Jews read the Bible differently in relation to the land.[394] For Neuhaus Israel is understood as having a wider meaning that merely "Jewish self-determination in the Land", which is how it is understood in Judaism. In Catholic theology Israel also means the Church, and the Biblical concept of land is a place of transformation through the Resurrection, where the land that is called holy is not restricted to Biblical lands "but rather comes to signify the face of an earth transformed by Jesus' victory over sin and death."[395] This point is also reflected in current Palestinian theologies of land, most notably that of the Lutheran scholar Munther Isaac, who maintains that Christianity has universalized understandings of "Land" with a call and expectation to seek justice in any land where Christian witness and mission is exercised.[396]

Finally in this list of four reasons why the Catholic Church is reticent to recognize the place of Israel in Jewish self-understanding is the different

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[393] For an in-depth analysis of Christian Zionism, see *Land of Promise? An Anglican exploration of Christian attitudes to the Holy Land, with special reference to Christian Zionism*, Anglican Consultative Council, 2012/

[394] "Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009," *One In Christ*, volume 43/2 (2009), pp. 22ff.

[395] Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009", p. 23.

[396] Munther Isaac, *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centered Biblical Theology of the Promised Land*, Langham Monographs, 2015.

understandings of Jewish vocation. This is where Neuhaus expresses his anxiety with respect to Zionism. He asserts that many Catholics are ill at ease with notions of Jewish return to the land and that since Vatican II the Church has fought against antisemitism "so that Jews might find their home and their security among the nations of the world and fulfil their historic vocation." He concludes this point with the distinction drawn by Pope Benedict XVI on differentiating between the Church's relationship to the Jews (spiritual and religious) and the attitudes towards the State of Israel (political) as offering a coherent distinction within dialogue, noting in conclusion that Catholics cannot ignore the concerns of justice.[397]

The visit of Pope Benedict to the Holy Land in 2009 was a significant milestone in Jewish-Catholic relations. During that visit the pope visited the Western Wall, and Edward Kessler echoes the perception of many Jews that this contributed to a final repudiation of a "theology of perpetual wandering".[398]

Meanwhile the pope also spoke, during his visit of the basic link between the Church and Israel, but also did so whilst in Jordan, a predominantly Muslim country. One should not ignore the significance of this development. To affirm the connection of the Church to "Israel" whilst in a majority Arab Muslim context raises important issues. Pope Benedict in doing this laid down a challenge to much Arab Christian discourse that seeks to deny the connection

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[397] Matters of justice are arguably the abiding concern of the Catholic Church in relation to Palestine, particularly during the Papacy of Benedict XVI and Francis. In particular the plight of the thousands of refugees on Israel's boarders but also the political situation that Palestinians face in Gaza and the West Bank. For instance, in his 2009 visit to the region Pope Benedict called for an end the Gaza blockade, whilst on his visit to Bethlehem during the same visit he raised concerns about the decline in the Christian population and called for a just solution to the conflict. Meanwhile following Pope Francis' visit to the Holy Land in 2020 the Vatican recognized a Palestinian State.

[398] Kessler, " 'I am Joseph, Your Brother'. A Jewish Perspective on Christian-Jewish Relations since Nostra Aetate No.4", in *Theological Studies* 74 (2013), pp.48-72.

of Judaism to the Land, and which prefers to lay emphasis upon a close Christian-Muslim symbiosis. Yet at the same time it became apparent during the Benedict papacy of his more critical and perhaps less sympathetic approach to Islam.[399] Once again we are presented with how in practice “not repenting of gifts” (Judaism) and “holding with esteem” (Muslims) are to be manifested in the mission of the church in the world.

This notion that the establishment of the State of Israel as the final repudiation of a “theology of perpetual wandering” is essentially the Jewish solution to the problem of antisemitism. But there is a theological point that can easily be missed: Jews have found their own solution without the need of Christian theological revisionism, suggesting, at least in part, that the State of Israel’s existence undermines one of the principal Christian theological motivators for dialogue with Jews. This may be part of the reason why Jewish-Christian dialogue in the West has struggled to take a full account of the geo-political concerns that relate to the land and the displacement of the Palestinian people. The cognitive dissonance therefore lies in the way in which Neuhaus presents the difference between that held by most Jews and many Catholics: Jews find their fulfilled destiny with self-determination in the land, as opposed the view held by many Christians that antisemitism can be overcome so that

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[399] In particular, as a result of Pope Benedict XVI’s lecture on the 12th September 2006 at the University of Regensburg, Germany, “Faith, Reason and the University—Memories and Reflections” quoted the adverse remarks about Islam and Muhammad uttered by the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II, there were widespread protests and condemnation in Islamic countries. See further James V. Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture*, South Bend: St. Augustine Press, 2007; Giuliano Amato: “Faith and Reason in the Regensburg Address” in Marta Cartabia and Andrea Simoncini (eds), *Pope Benedict XVI’s Legal Thought: A Dialogue on the Foundation of Law*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015, pp. 125ff; Barbara Wood and Andrew Unsworth, “Before and After Regensburg: Pope Benedict XVI, Interreligious Dialogue and Islam”, in Anthony O’Mahony, Timothy Wright and Mohammad Ali Shomali (eds), *A Catholic-Shia Dialogue: Ethics in Today’s Society*, London: Melisende, 2008, pp. 45–68.

Jews can fulfil a vocation within Western society. The danger with this point is that it exaggerates a dissonance to make a point and thus leads to a polarized picture of where Jews and Christians stand. Nevertheless, Neuhaus is broadly correct in pointing to the different emphases held by Catholics and Jews alike when it comes to questions of land, and points to a more nuanced and subtle approach to Jewish-Christian dialogue that finds the means to hold different points of view in contention.

(iii) Catholic-Jewish Relations in the Holy Land

To speak of Jewish-Catholic relations implies that there is merely a single discourse. Neuhaus, however, points out that there are at least two distinct paradigms regarding the Jewish-Catholic encounter. The first is the more familiar Western European narrative of Jewish minority status within a powerful, and often anti-Judaic, Christian ecclesial context. This is the narrative against which *Nostra Aetate* reacted and sought to speak a different language as to how the church speaks of the Jews and Judaism. Jews were the outsiders in the European story, blamed for killing Christ, and often blamed for social calamity. In this paradigm the Shoah is the main reference point for Jewish-Catholic relations and the creation of the State of Israel the means by which Jews return to history and claim their own destiny.

However, a second narrative is that which arises out of a Middle Eastern, Arab experience where the main reference point is not the Shoah but the status of Palestine and particularly the *Nakba* that ensued from the creation of Israel as a Jewish State. This meant that for the first time Christians, including

Catholics, have lived as a minority under Jewish political power.[400] This alone makes Israel-Palestine a unique context for Jewish-Catholic relations, what Neuhaus calls a reversal of power relations. Thus, the daily reality of Israeli occupation means that the nature of the dialogue is profoundly different from that within the European context.[401] However in this context it is the primacy of Islam in Middle Eastern society that holds and forms the narrative. Yet, as Neuhaus and Jamal Khader observe in their 2005 article, Catholics of the region (Latin and Eastern) seek to engage with Jews as they understand themselves within the context of the Holy Land, which is in marked contrast to *Nostra Aetate* which avoids matters of the Land. Yet this is within the significant challenges of the acute political situation faced by Palestinian Muslims and Christians.[402]

The paradox however is that the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 contributed to the de-pluralization of the Arab world, where once vibrant Jewish communities in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen almost completely disappear as a result of the geo-political changes that the creation of Israel set in train.[403] The often neglected experience of Jewish Arabs, many of whom found themselves expelled from lands where they had existed for centuries, is another aspect of this depluralization.[404] These

[400] This particular reality has resulted in the importing of aspects of Western anti-Judaic discourse: See Gudrun Krämer: “Anti-Semitism in the Muslim World: A Critical Review”, *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 46. Issue 3, 2006, pp. 243–276.
[401] David Neuhaus, “Catholic-Jewish Relations in the State of Israel: Theological Perspectives”, in Anthony O’Mahony and John Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, pp. 237–251.
[402] Jamal Khader and David Neuhaus, “A Holy Land Context for *Nostra Aetate*”, pp. 67–88, http://escholarship. bc. edu/scjr/vol1/iss1/art8/.
[403] Neuhaus, *Writing from the Holy Land*, p. 189.
[404] See further Moshe Behar, and Benite, Zvi Ben-Dor (eds), *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought : Writings on Identity, Politics, and Culture, 1893–1958*, Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2013.

communities often had a deep engagement with Eastern Christian communities in those contexts, as well as Islam. Arriving in Israel they brought with them this experience of lost pluralism.[405] Neuhaus points out that with respect to Eastern Christian traditions, the only country where there is a developing dialogue between Judaism and Eastern Christianity is in Israel.[406] However, and additionally, the experience of Arab Jews points to how Israel has radically reshaped religious and cultural identity, which evidences how religious self-understanding can reshape and redefine the geo-political status quo. It is within this context that Catholic-Jewish dialogue is unfolding and may prove to be of critical importance.[407]

These two narratives of the Jewish-Christian encounter are powerfully illustrated by the perception of the Jew in the European as compared to the Middle Eastern context. The European Christian sees the Jew primarily as the victim of a misreading of the Christian tradition—the Middle Eastern Catholic sees the Jew often as a soldier, policeman or settler.[408] Furthermore, Christians of the region do not see themselves as sharing the same experience of antisemitism that is felt in European churches, existing in a context of Jewish dominance.[409] This mirrors the contrast, even conflict, between the centrality of either of the Shoah or *Nakba*. Notwithstanding this

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[405] See further Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984; Martin Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011; Malka Hillel Shulewitz (ed), *The Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*, London: Continuum, 1999.
[406] Neuhaus, *Writing from the Holy Land,* p. 197.
[407] See Neuhaus' article "Shimon Balas—a Jewish Arab at 80", in *Writing from the Holy Land*, pp. 97–108.
[408] We might further observe that the older memory of Arab Jews as integral to Middle Eastern societies has to some extent become muted amidst a quasi-polemical reading of the Arab experience which is both viewed through the lens of the *Nakba* and interpreted through an increasingly Islamist narrative.
[409] Jamal Khader and David Neuhaus, "A Holy Land Context for *Nostra Aetate*", pp. 67–88 http://escholarship. bc. edu/scjr/vol1/iss1/art8.

juxtaposition, Neuhaus notes that the official documents of the Catholic Church afford a pre-eminence to its relationship to Judaism, both in terms of the Jewishness of Jesus, the place and authority of the Old Testament and what the New Testament says about the ongoing validity of the Jewish covenant.[410]

Neuhaus' juxtaposing of these two anti-Judaic trajectories—that the Jew belongs neither in Europe nor the Middle East—is revealing in terms of much of Jewish, and particularly Zionist, consciousness where these two anti-Judaic narratives are often conflated and understood as having common threads.

To return to Neuhaus' starting point regarding Judaism, self-understanding is the important starting point for Catholic relations to Judaism, and critically the sense of belonging and land are central to Jewish self-understanding and why narratives, old and new, that reject Jewish legitimacy in the land (whether in Europe or in the Middle East) are so problematic for Jewish self-understanding.

Neuhaus suggests that matters of justice need to take centre stage within the Jewish-Catholic encounter, otherwise the emphasis upon "common heritage" will fail to see the issues as they confront Palestinian Christians. This is most sharply demonstrated when it comes to the Old Testament as a clear example of shared heritage, yet in geo-political terms there is the risk that the Biblical Israel will be confused with the modern State of Israel. Thus, the language of "Israel" becomes an important issue to be addressed in Jewish-Catholic

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[410] Neuhaus, *Writings*, pp. 188–191.

relations (and more broadly Jewish-Christian) precisely because of its theo-political ambiguity.

Yet this is an issue that remains problematic within the wider Jewish-Christian encounter. Neuhaus illustrates this with an incident from the 2010 Synod for the Catholic Church in the Middle East when the Greek Catholic Archbishop Selim Bustros raised concerns about the confusion between conflating the Biblical and political language which led in turn to a very public demand by Rabbi David Rosen that the Archbishop's remarks be repudiated by the Curia.[411] Rosen's remarks, it could be argued, illustrate a point of view of many within Judaism that are engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue that fails to take adequate account of Arab Christian self-understanding and not to even acknowledge that there is an issue of concern in this regard. What Rabbi Rosen's remarks illustrate is the extent to which the Christian reference points in dialogue are framed within a Western discourse and how the emphasis of Eastern Christianity is not considered important enough to be of dialogical significance. This acute sense of being excluded from the broader dialogue is another important theme in Palestinian Christian writings, most vividly expressed in the previous chapter in the work of Mitri Raheb who writes of a new-replacement theology whereby the Palestinian people are replaced by Israel.[412]

A distinctive, if not unique, aspect of Neuhaus' writings concerns the changing nature of Christianity within Israel itself. He has carefully charted the trends regarding Christian communities that came to Israel as a result of Eastern

[411] Neuhaus, *Writing from the Holy Land*, p. 194.
[412] Mitri Raheb, "Shaping Communities in times of Crises: Narratives of Land, people and Identities", www. mitriraheb.org.

European migration where people of Christian faith have a Jewish family connection, Hebrew-speaking (including Catholic) congregations, Messianic movements and those that have come as migrant workers or asylum seekers.[413] He identifies two significant challenges here. The first is with the transmission of the faith in a majority Jewish (and secular) context, with a trend (particularly amongst those of Eastern European heritage) to emigrate elsewhere (Western Europe and North America). The second challenge is an ecumenical one, for whilst amongst Palestinian (Arab) Christians there is a strong impulse towards an “ecumenism of solidarity”, there has been a resistance to acknowledge the fact of Christianity in Israel itself is increasingly plural. There are here divergent ecumenical trends in relation to Judaism. The Palestinian ecumenism of solidarity has often problematized Judaism, seeing it as lacking historical rootedness in the land and thus sees greater need to stress a closer familial relationship with Islam. Meanwhile many of the non-Arab Israeli Christians seek greater integration and recognition with the State of Israel, seeking a deeper understanding of Judaism, often wishing to emphasize the Jewishness of Jesus. Neuhaus’ observation that ecumenism “thrives where political (or ideological) interests converge—pro Palestinian or pro Israeli” also points towards how inter-religious concerns impact at a deep level with emerging ecumenical identity.[414] However, this ecumenical identity is one that finds its context in the Land: Land therefore matters in respect of Christian identity and theology, and this, we might suggest is a significant implication of Neuhaus’ work.

[413] For a detailed account, see Neuhaus, “The Challenge of New forms of Christian Presence in the Holy Land”, in *Tantur Fest*, p. 133–145.
[414] “So that they may be one”, p. 53.

4.6 Jewish Identity and the Quest for a Theology of the Land

(i) Jewish Identity and Inter-Religious Dialogue

The 2000 document "Dabu Emet" (Speaking Truth) spoke of the creation of the State of Israel as the single most important Jewish event since the Holocaust. It reflected the perspectives of Jewish contributors from a range of denominations and asserted that the shared scriptural heritage of Judaism and Christianity should lead both faiths to affirm the particularity of Jewish election in the Holy Land.[415] Similarly Rabbi Eugene Korn states:

> Israel stands at the centre of Jewish self-perception—how most Jews see themselves individually and collectively as a people. Israel is the stage on which Jewish life and peoplehood is played out most vividly in the present, and the key to Jewish spiritual hopes for the future.[416]

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks also makes this point, maintaining that the Land, Israel and Jewish election are part of the integrated whole that is Jewish identity.[417]

Not withstanding the minority of Jewish writers who take a differing view, regarding Israel as a Jewish State to be a danger to Jewish people,[418] it is fair to state that the overwhelming view amongst Jews in Israel and the diaspora is that Israel is integral to Jewish self-understanding.

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[415] Neuhaus, "Harvest and Horizons: An Appraisal of *Nostra Aetate* Para. 4", in K. C. Ellis (ed.), *Nostra Aetate, Non-Christian Religions, and Interfaith Relations,* pp.67-87

[416] Eugene Korn, *The Jewish Connection to Israel, the Promised Land: A Brief Introduction for Christians*, Nashville: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008, p. ixf.

[417] Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews, and Judaism in the Global Culture*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009, 133ff. A minority viewpoint does exist that argues that Israel as a Jewish State is a present and future danger to itself and to Jews.

[418] See for instance Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion*, London: Pluto Press, 1994.

Such a reality must surely have an unavoidable urgency in any dialogue between Jews and Christians in Middle Eastern context? Neuhaus' plea to his fellow Christians that they should engage with Jews and Judaism according to current Jewish self-understanding underlines this point. He counsels against any sense of allowing a Jewishness of Christian imagining to replace the Jew of reality in the modern world. *Nostra Aetate*, he points out, was significant in changing the way the Catholic Church was to relate to religious otherness, not merely engaging with other religions in terms of Christian understanding of them.[419]

The need to dialogue with Jews according to how Jews see themselves today, rather than a Christian understanding of who they are in the world, is paramount. Yet there is a complexity to this in that Christians seek dialogue with Jews through the lens of faith and religious belief, whereas Jews seek to engage with the world as a people and as a nation. In making this crucial point we are led to the recognition that the Jew of past centuries was a very different Jew from the one whom the church engages with in a post-Vatican II context. The Jew of the past was a figure of contempt, blamed for the death of Christ, and became conflated with the myth of Wandering Jew.[420] However, the Jew of today is primarily a member of a people who seeks to apprehend its place in the contemporary world. Unless this is acknowledged there is the danger that false presumptions are made as to the epistemology of the dialogical encounter. Crucially, this involves not only a theological response to

[419] Neuhaus, *Writing from the Holy Land*, pp.111ff
[420] Marchadour and Neuhaus, *The Land, the Bible and* History, p. 121f.

antisemitism and the Shoah but also a need to take seriously how Zionism relates to contemporary Jewish self-understanding.

Indeed, the very premise of this thesis is that Jewish self-understanding has changed significantly, with “land” playing a central role, and that Christian theologies of the Jewish-Christian encounter need to follow both the theo-political and geographical shifts. Yet, as Neuhaus himself points out, whilst Jews and Christians may share some common Biblical language their theological discourses often diverge. This is an obvious point, yet he pinpoints an essential problem within the discourse of Jewish-Christian relations, that the apparent commonalities can lead to assumptions that both faith traditions will reach the same theological conclusions. The ordering of the books of what Christians call the Old Testament is different to that found in the Tanakh—the Old Testament ends with the books of the prophets that are believed to point towards Christ where for Jews the culmination of the Tanakh is 2 Chronicles with the hope that the exiled Jews will once again “go up to Zion” (2 Chronicles 36.23).[421] In fact we may go further in suggesting that when Christianity understands the fulfilment of scripture to be the Incarnation of Christ, for Jews it is the return of God’s people to Zion. This suggests that the scriptures in common to the two faiths point to different future theological fulfilments, and herein lies the fundamental parting of ways between Judaism and Christianity that will always be irreconcilable, an implication that is made stark by the political reality of post-1948 Israel.

[421] Neuhaus, “Harvest and Horizons”, p. 79.

In fact, Neuhaus points to the universalizing nature of Christianity in relation to the land—the event of Pentecost radically expanded the concept of land to include peoples of all lands.[422] However, this is complicated by later developments within Christian history, where Christendom brought with it an enthusiasm for borders and therefore militarization and ultimately an imperial mind-set that would ostracize the Jew within its borders.[423] As Neuhaus observes, Jewish suffering has its roots in Christian liberation and empowerment and these dynamics must be understand and dislodged but in such a way that does not create its own form of dispossession. There is therefore a need for theological vigilance regarding the church's relationship to the State of Israel, which must have at its forefront the human rights of the Christian and Muslim populations in the land and the protection of holy sites, particularly in Jerusalem.[424] Any theology of land in this context cannot be conceived in the abstract and must be fully cognisant of the impact of occupation and land confiscations.[425] Neuhaus clearly states where the church stands in relation to Judaism:

> The Jewish people, like all peoples, has a right to express itself in its own terms. After Jews have been marginalised for centuries, Zionism rejected that marginalisation and demanded empowerment. The

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[422] This is also an important theme in Palestinian theologies of land. See Munther Isaac: op.cit.
[423] Neuhaus, "Harvest and Horizons", p. 80.
[424] The Holy See's position on Jerusalem can be understood as regarding Jerusalem has having a unique status, that it is holy to three faiths and that its holy sites need to be preserved and protected. See David Neuhaus: "Jerusalem: The Catholic Church and the Holy City", International Council of Christians and Jews, 01. 05. 218; See also: Bård Mæland: "The Plural Significance of Jerusalem: Kenneth Cragg's theological vision ex infra", *Studia Theologica* 61 (2017), pp. 140–162.
[425] Neuhaus must surely have in mind the dangers of Christian Zionism. See David M. Neuhaus, "What is Christian Zionism?" in Rafiq Khoury and Rainer Zimmer-Winkel (eds), *Christian Theology in the Palestinian Context*, Berlin: AphorismA, 2019, pp. 265–279.

> Church today understands the Jewish historical, religious, and emotional link to the land, rejecting the centuries of the traditional teaching that condemned the Jews to a perpetual state of exile as punishment for their refusal to accept Christ. However, Church recognition of the ongoing specificity of the Jewish people and its attachment to the land of Israel cannot be read as legitimisation and support for the political and ideological determination to rule the land exclusively.[426]

What this then points us towards is the question of how the theological and historical characteristics of antisemitism relate to the modern Jewish political paradigm where the State of Israel is critical to Jewish identity. Is criticism of the State of Israel, even questioning Zionist intent, to be viewed as much a trait of antisemitism as negative characterizations of Jews as people?

(ii) Different Histories, One Context

Even the most superficial reading of the Israel-Palestine conflict will reveal the different, and sometimes contradictory, readings of history and ethical status of key events. In respect of this, links are often drawn between the Palestinian *Nakba* and the Shoah. The Shoah is often thought of as the end of modernity, as Michael Barnes observes it draws “a raggedly ugly line under the pretention of human reason to total autonomy.” The Shoah is a post-modern context that will inevitably be understood through the rejection of former metanarratives and absolute theologies. The Shoah refutes all attempts to neatly explain and comprehend the extent of human cruelty on an industrial

[426] Neuhaus, “Harvest and Horizons”, p. 82.

scale. Michael Barnes further observes that theology is not silenced in the wake of the Holocaust and other traumatic events of the 20th and 21st centuries, but it does need to acquire greater subtlety and sensitivity.[427] But what is overlooked in many explorations of the Jewish-Christian encounter is the extent to which Zionism is Judaism's attempt to explain the place that Jews occupy in human history in the shadow of Auschwitz. Zionism is therefore not simply another religiously orientated nationalism, it is the Jewish attempt to step over the questions of theodicy to find a political hermeneutic that interprets the place of the Jew in the post-Holocaust world. But concomitantly this leads to questions of how to comprehend the Palestinian *Nakba* as the critical event for Palestinian self-understanding. This is an extremely delicate point, however; viewed in the eastern context the Shoah will always be viewed through the lens of the *Nakba*. This will trouble many Western thinkers in the area of Jewish-Christian relations as it might imply moral equivalence. What we might tentatively suggest, however, is that both the Shoah and *Nakba* function as the respective hermeneutical matrices of both the Zionist Israeli state and Palestinian national self-understanding with each containing within themselves a negative suspicion of the other, what we might call a mutualized sub-hermeneutic of suspicion.

But beyond this vexed matter Neuhaus suggests that Jews and Christians might consider the possibility of being able to speak of history together, rather than in competing or negating narratives, as this is central to the search for reconciliation. This is true for Palestinians and Israelis, and it is true also for

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[427] Michael Barnes, *Waiting on Grace: A Theology of Dialogue*, Oxford, 2020, p. 8f.

Jews and Catholics. For Jews how history is told is important to matters of identity, especially as they relate to the Land.

The creation of the State of Israel, and thus Jewish return to landedness, as well as “return to history” is critical to Jewish self-understanding. Likewise matters relating to the Jewish experience during the Shoah, and the role of the church, are also of direct relevance to Jewish encounters in the contemporary world. The contested legacy of Pope Pius XII leads Neuhaus to ask whether it could ever be possible for Jews and Christians to write history together? Whilst the history of Jews and Christians, especially in Europe, is a traumatic one that is “submerged in a valley of tears”, the story of the Church constitutes sacred history for Catholics. Here this “sacred history” collides with alternative versions of Pius as lacking in courage, and even compassion, to act against the Shoah. Whilst there is a tendency amongst Pius’ defenders to engage in hagiography, Neuhaus points out that the frequent critics of the then pontiff also lack critical reflection. The very existence of the Shoah, Neuhaus suggests, is a “resounding accusation against the Pope, the Church and the world”.[428] However, it should be possible, and desirable, to document what the Pope did at the time, to write and own this history together as Jews and Christians, as a vital task on the path to reconciliation, friendship and trust. Edward Kessler likewise stresses the importance for Jews and Christians to remember that in Nazi occupied countries, churches were often targeted, and also highlighting the actions of those who took risks, such as the future Pope John XXIII in providing baptismal certificates for Hungarian Jews

[428] Neuhaus: "Moments of crisis and grace: Jewish-Catholic relations in 2009", *One In Christ*, volume 43/2 (2009), p. 20.

in a bid to protect them from Nazi persecution.[429] This would echo Neuhaus' desire for the writing of a common history, and it remains a critical issue that has resonances with other aspects of Jewish-Christian engagement.

Kenneth Cragg has spoken of the problems associated with the sacrilization of nationhood (in relation to Israel), and this poses the question as to whether history, as told within a religious or theological framework, seems destined to take on the vestment of the sacred. This is as true of Judaism's telling the story of the Shoah and of foundation of the State of Israel (including, and especially its narrative about its conflicts in 1948 and 1967) as the story of the Catholic Church in history.

Here we are left with important questions to ponder. In particular, how does "sacred history" (i.e. the theological understanding of the place of the church within history) intersect and dialogue with political narratives of land that have taken on the vestiges of the sacred, albeit with an overtly to secular language. A second question is whether history written together by Jews and Catholics means that the writing of "sacred history" has had Jewish participation in the process of its writing?

More widely there has been a debate concerned the role of religion in nationalist movements. This has taken various forms and different intensities in different contexts as diverse as Brazil, India, the Philippines, Russia and the United States. The complex realities in Israel and Palestine, whilst having their own particularities, are part of wider post-modern global picture where religion has often been at the forefront of political consideration, in contrast to

[429] Edward Kessler, "'I am Joseph, Your Brother': A Jewish Perspective on Christian-Jewish Relations since *Nostra Aetate* No. 4", *Theological Studies* 74 (2013), pp. 48–72.

modernity that had assumed that human progress had outgrown religion and its usefulness. Scott M. Thomas suggests that what is happening here is the emergence of a multicultural international society in which religion plays a critical role.[430] Pope Francis meanwhile has spoken into this debate posing the matter of what constitutes “authentic faith”, the characteristics of which include a genuine encounter with the human dignity of others, advocating a “culture of encounter”.[431] Such ideas speak strongly into Neuhaus’ thinking in relation to Israel and Palestine and the dignity of its people.[432]

4.7 Is a Minimal Catholic Zionism Possible?

We have described David Neuhaus as a “thinker in motion” and that arises out of the lived experience of a Catholic theologian of Jewish heritage who is living his priestly vocation within the Eastern context of contemporary Jewish identity and Palestinian Christian presence. As we have seen, he has attempted to formulate his engagement with Judaism in terms of how Jews understand themselves in the world today and not as Christians would prefer to interpret them. Ultimately this raises the question of how Christian theology is to approach the reality of Zionism as the expression of Jewish presence in the world. Neuhaus never explicitly outlines his own views of Zionism (although there is much criticism and unease) and how it relates to Catholic

[430] Scott M. Thomas, “Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously: The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Society”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 2000, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 815–841.
[431] David Hollenbach SJ, “La Civiltà Cattolicia”, En. Ed. Vol. 7, No. 2 art. 3 0223: 10. 32009/22072446. 0223. 3.
[432] There would certainly be common ground on this theme between Jews and Christians. See for instance Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, London: Continuum, 2002.

theologies of Judaism and it would be fair to observe that he prefers a more nuanced approach to Zionism and the State of Israel. How then might a different intervention on this matter from another Catholic thinker help to place Neuhaus' thinking in a wider context?

Gavin d'Costa is Professor of Catholic Theology at the University of Bristol and has published widely on a variety of subjects but is most known for his work in the field of a theology of religious pluralism. His work includes: *Theology and Religious Pluralism* (1986), *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (2000), *Sexing the Trinity: Gender, Culture and the Divine* (2000), *Theology and the Public Square: Church Academy and Nation* (2005), *Christianity and World Religions* (2009), *Vatican II: Catholic Doctrines on Jews and Muslims* (2014), but it is in his book *Catholic Doctrines on the Jewish People After Vatican II* (2019) where he moots the notion of a minimal Catholic-Zionism, that is the main focus for our considerations as it directly concerns the question of "land".[433]

In recent years D'Costa has turned to the magisterium and its teachings on other faiths. With respect of Judaism he operates from the assumption of the importance of doctrine and how doctrine leads to the development of further doctrines. By outlining the development of Catholic doctrine as it relates to the Jewish people, he offers the possibility of a "minimal Catholic Zionism".

Hitherto d'Costa has carefully examined the documents of the Second Vatican Council and has challenged many assumptions and interpretations of the documents relating to Catholic-Jewish relations that may not be present in the

[433] D'Costa has also explored a minimalist Catholic Zionism in articles and conference contributions.

text when they were written, in particular the idea that *Nostra Aetate* disowns the evangelization of the Jewish people.[434] However, it is *Nostra Aetate* implicitly rejecting any notion that the Jewish covenant has been revoked, that is d'Costa's starting point. Doctrine concerning Judaism rests on the critical question of whether the Jewish Covenant is revoked and that the Church as the New Israel cancels any sense of "Israel" as a continuing and flourishing context of Jewish self-understanding. That position of supersession was explicit when Pope Pius X responded to Theodore Herzl's appeal in 1904 to recognize the fledgling Zionist movement:

> We cannot give approval to this movement. We cannot prevent the Jews from going to Jerusalem— we could never sanction it. The soil of Jerusalem, if it was not always sacred, has been sanctified by the life of Jesus Christ. As the head of the Church I cannot tell you anything different. The Jews had not recognized our Lord, therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people.[435]

There are no Catholic documents, d'Costa tells us, which lend support to a Catholic Zionism, nor anything that might harmonize with forms of Christian Zionism advocated by Protestant evangelicals. Indeed this "minimal Catholic Zionism" would not concern with eschatological signs of the Parousia as with Evangelical Protestant Christian Zionism, but simply rests on the doctrinal

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[434] D'Costa disputes the claim that Vatican II disavows Evangelization of the Jews, a position echoed by the Church of England's Faith and Order document "God's Unfailing Word: Theological and Practical Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations", London: Church House Publishing, 2019, pp. 51–60, however the same publication also includes an afterword by the Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis who expresses misgivings about this matter, p. 103f. On the vexed question of mission in Jewish-Christian dialogue, see Edward Kessler, "Christian Mission and the Jewish People", in Kirsteen Kim, and Alison Fitchett-Climenhaga (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Mission Studies*, Oxford Handbooks (2022).

[435] Quoted in Gavin d'Costa, *Catholic Doctrines and the Jewish People after Vatican II*, Oxford, 2019, p. 115.

trajectory of the magisterium and how it understands Judaism in the world and in relation to the church.[436]

Noting that historically the Church had seen Judaism being replaced, with Jews rendered landless and the promises passing to the church (the "New Israel"), from 1948 onwards the Church had moved to a position of neutrality on questions of land. Notwithstanding this, the relationship between the State of Israel and the Vatican has been less than straightforward, as we have observed earlier, with much of this concerned matters such as the control, preservation of, and access to holy sites, the plight of refugees, the Vatican diplomatic principal of not being involved in territorial disputes between nations and the careful balance that was needed in respect of relations with Eastern-rite Catholics. Nevertheless, d'Costa notes that between the time of the meeting between Herzl and Pope Pius X and the present, Christian supersessionism has been in retreat though not entirely eradicated.[437] This is alongside the development of Vatican-Israeli diplomatic relations from initial reticence and concern to the Fundamental Accord in December 1993 which established formal diplomatic ties. There is therefore a trajectory of Catholic thought about Jews and Judaism and any "minimal Catholic Zionism" is a future step that can only come about if certain political conditions are met.

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[436] Christian Zionism, especially in its Protestant-Evangelical manifestations remains a troubling theological terrain for both Jewish-Christian dialogue and ecumenical relations given its non-dialogical predisposition and its potential to disrupt ecumenical relationships in the Holy Land.

[437] Gavin d'Costa, *Catholic Doctrines and the Jewish People after Vatican II*, pp. 114ff. D'Costa's comment that "there are legitimate reasons (ignorance or misunderstanding) why many Jews may not have recognized Jesus as messiah" is surely suggestive of a residual supersessionism in Catholic (Christian) theologies of Judaism, or else there would be a third option—that Christianity might be wrong about the person of Jesus, which is what most Jews content.

D'Costa imagines what he calls a "minimal Catholic Zionism" being the next stage in the development of the church's teaching.[438] However, he offers this tentatively noting that it is unlikely to gain any theological foothold so long as a Palestinian state remains elusive. The promise of a minimal Catholic Zionism rests upon the question as to whether the covenantal promises concerning the Jews and the Land can be regarded as irrevocable. D'Costa suggests that the position post-Vatican II implies that such promises remain and are not replaced or abolished by the new Covenant in Christ, and this must include all the covenant promises in relation to the Land. This would suggest a further doctrinal step that is explicitly concerned with "land". In the 1985 document "Notes on the Correct way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church" and in particular:

> The permanence of Israel … is a historical fact and a sign to be interpreted within God's design. We in any case rid ourselves of the traditional idea of a people punished, preserved as a living argument for Christian apologetic. It remains a chosen people …[439]

D'Costa believes this to be groundbreaking and significant, and notes that a minimalist Zionism can be found in many Jewish writings and in the comments of John Paul II to a Jewish audience in Brasilia in 1991 which

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[438] He develops George Emil Irani's for stages of the developing relationship between the Holy See and Israel, with d'Costa adding the Fundamental Accord of 1993 as a fifth stage. D'Costa, p. 121, see further George Emil Irani, *The Papacy and the Middle East: The Role of the Holy See in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1962–1984*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986; Dominique Trimbur, "The Catholic Church's thought on Judaism, Zionism and the state of Israel: Mid-Nineteenth Century-1965", in Anthony O'Mahony and John Flannery (eds), *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East*, London: Melisende 2010, pp. 225–236.

[439] Quoted in d'Costa, *Catholic Doctrines and the Jewish People after Vatican II*, p. 128.

quotes Ezekiel 34.13, an important text with regard to the ingathering of the people of God into the land.[440]

D'Costa's attempt to wrestle with the question of the Covenant and its relationship to the question of land is instructive in that it highlights a collision between the expressly theological language of covenant and the claims of religious nationalism when they share language in common. To assert that there is no revoking of the Covenant, and that Jewish destiny is bound up with the land inevitably shifts the centre point of the Jewish-Christian encounter away from Europe and to Jerusalem.

When we turn to evaluate d'Costa's contribution as compared to that of David Neuhaus we might note first of all a number of places of synergy between the two thinkers even though Neuhaus is working out of a particular ecclesial context as opposed to d'Costa's academic interest in the development of doctrine. Both emphasize the important of dialoguing with Jews as they understand themselves in the world at present, although this is more unconditional and explicit with Neuhaus. They both highlight the way in which the Catholic Church's official teaching on the Jewish people has not been a static entity but one that is developing and evolving as the implications of previous theological utterances become more apparent. In their very different ways they also highlight the more controversial issue, that of the reality of Christians of Jewish heritage—for d'Costa this is the validity of some form of Christian witness to Jews and for Neuhaus the pastoral and ecumenical priorities in Israel towards Hebrew Christian communities. However, d'Costa

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[440] D'Costa, *Catholic Doctrines and the Jewish People after Vatican II*, p. 134.

has gone further than Neuhaus in arguing that there is theological legitimacy in the church's mission to the Jews. This has been challenged by Edward Kessler and John Pawlikowski, the former takes issue with the idea that Jewish suffering can be apprehended in an atemporal manner as "mission" has been weaponized in history against the Jews, whilst Pawlikowski argues that the trajectory begun by *Nostra Aetate* is towards a "normalized position" in the church's understanding of the Jewish people.[441]

A potential stumbling block may be struck by d'Costa's ideas of a form of Catholic Zionism. Those who hold to a fundamental objection to any form of Christian Zionism would point to the dangers of theological endorsements of religious nationalisms and they might therefore object that d'Costa is suggesting a problematic development in Catholic thought. This might be especially the case when we try to place his ideas alongside Eastern Christian thought that is likely to continue to view Zionism and Jewish presence in the land as an expression of Western colonialism and therefore disruptive to the self-understanding of Christian (and Muslim) presence in the Land. Furthermore, the presence of Christian Zionist groups in Israel remains controversial and problematic both for Jews and Christians: for the former in the targeting of Jews of Russian origin and for the latter in the way they invalidate the indigenous ecclesial presence.[442] A dialogue with Palestinian

[441] Edward Kessler, "A Jewish Reponse to Gavin d'Costa", *Theological Studies*, 73 (2012), pp. 614–628; John T. Pawlikowski O.S.M., "A Catholic Response to Gavin d'Costa", *Theological Studies*, 73 (2012), pp. 629–640. Both responses are to a paper presented by d'Costa at the University of Bristol in 2011 which outlines ideas that would later appear in his book previously discussed.
[442] The status of immigrants from the former Soviet Union—their Jewishness or otherwise—is complex, with many having only the most tenuous claim to being Jewish but were nevertheless encouraged to emigrate by the Israeli authorities in the 1990s. See David M. Neuhaus, "New Wine into Old Wineskins: Russian Jews and Non-Jews in the State of Israel",

theologians would be essential here who continue to regard Christian Zionism as forms of imperial hermeneutics. Furthermore, any form of Christian Zionism is open to the criticism that it is a Christian theological instrumentalization of the Jewish people rather than arising from a mutual dialogical encounter. What d'Costa neglects is attention to both Jewish and Christian eastern thinking and history in the land, nor does he engage with the negating quality of Christian Zionism upon the context of Eastern Christianity. Furthermore, it is increasingly the case that Christian Palestinian thought is stressing co-existence that recognizes the plurality of faiths in the Middle East as the pathway to peace and security which also has much in common with the Levantine school of Mizrahi Jewish thought.[443]

However, what d'Costa does not address and which Neuhaus' work might be said to faintly hint at are the implications for Catholic-Muslim relations which have arguably developed to a much lesser extent since Vatican II in comparison to Catholic-Jewish dialogue. Neuhaus' work positions the Jewish-Christian encounter firmly in a context where Islam is a major religious player. Might not an easterly repositioned Jewish-Christian dialogue compel Christianity to reconsider how it understands Islam in a global context, especially given the intimate relationship of Middle East Christianity to Islam?

Journal of Eastern Christian Studies, Vol. 57, issue 3–4 (Peeters Online Journals), 2005, pp. 207–236.

[443] Numerous statements by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem either imply or state overtly the importance of Christian presence in the Holy Land and the need to protect clergy, holy sites and international pilgrims. See for example the statement on the challenge to the "status quo" of Holy Sites in May 2021 https://www.lpj.org/website-archives/patriarchs-and-heads-of-jerusalem-churches-concerned-about-alaqsa-mosque-worshippers-and-sheikh-jarrah-families.html (accessed 01/07/2023); the statement on Christian presence released on the 14 December 2021 https://j-diocese.org/wordpress/2021/12/14/statement-on-the-current-threat-to-the-christian-presence-in-the-holy-land/ (accessed 30/06/2023), and the Easter Message of 2023 https://www.lpj.org/archives/easter-2023-message-of-the-patriarchs-and-heads-of-churches-in-jerusalem.html (access 01/07/2023)

But in conclusion both thinkers point us to the growing theological importance of the land in the Jewish-Christian encounter, how the political reality of Israel as an expression of Jewish self-understanding is theologically unavoidable and why this dialogue is increasingly framed by questions formed in the Middle East as opposed to Europe. For this reason, both d'Costa and Neuhaus reveal to us an important theological and ecumenical question for the future.

4.8. Conclusion

Contemporary Judaism insists that for non-Jews to understand Jews in the 21st century then they must take seriously the place of the State of Israel in Jewish self-understanding. That inevitably means a geographical and temporal shift in how the Jewish-Christian encounter is to be apprehended. In this exegesis on the work of David Neuhaus we have explored some of the implications of this geographical and temporal shift. We have characterized David Neuhaus as a thinker in motion and this could suggest to us that future theological thinking about the Jewish-Christian encounter might be less about paradigms of thought and much more concerned with the dynamic impulse of the dialogical encounter. Inevitably this brings into focus the geo-political reality in which Jews and Christians find themselves in the 21st century with new dynamics of power (even if the power dynamics in Western countries that leaves Jews as a vulnerable minority are still in play). To put this point differently, the theological developments in Jewish-Christian dialogue, particularly the implications of *Nostra Aetate*, need to be reflected upon with the geo-political realities of the Holy Land today that not only bring together

Palestinian and Jewish self-understandings, but also Christian-Muslim relations, the place of Hebrew-speaking Christian congregations and the presence of forms of Christian Zionism which press upon Christian and Jewish self-understandings in their different ways.

We might say in conclusion that what Neuhaus demonstrates to us are the implications of the easterly tilt in the Jewish-Christian encounter which continues to wrestle with the abiding questions – of covenant, chosenness and universality versus particularity – yet in the geo-political context that is new theatre of inter-religious encounter, they take on a particular character whereby the demands of justice and compassion in a place of conflict, they are all the more pressing.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The Future Direction of Jewish-Christian Relations

In 1962 a critical event took place in the history of the Jewish people. The trial of Adolf Eichmann was to become a turning point in Israeli national consciousness. There were aspects to this trial which pose important questions for Judaism in the 20th century with its heartbeat more to be found in the Middle East and not Europe. Until this point there had been surprisingly little discussion with Israeli society about the sufferings of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. In popular Israeli culture the Holocaust was viewed with an air of confusion and perplexity as those Jews that went to the camps were characterized as offering no resistance, in contrast to the Zionist settlers who had “subdued the land” and built a nation. David Ben-Gurion was explicit in his hope that this trial would be more than merely a bringing to justice one of the principal architects of the Nazis so-called Final Solution, but demonstrating to the world that the state of Israel would never again submit to hostility, degradation, and slaughter. In demonstrating this Israel was not merely sending a signal to future anti-Jewish aggressors who might seek to revive the dreams of a new German Reich, but also any that sought to extinguish the Jewish state. Hannah Arendt, chronicled the trial and in particular commented on some of the ethical questions that were posed.[444] In particular the moral question as to whether the Jewish Councils created by

[444] Hannah Arendt (1906–75) was a German born philosopher, a student of the existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers, who supervised her thesis “Love and St. Augustine”. Her books include *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, London: Penguin, 1951, 2017 and *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, London: Penguin, 1963.

Eichmann had contributed to the large numbers that perished in the concentration camps; had the Jewish leadership of these councils not cooperated, it was suggested, then the sheer size of the death toll would have been significant reduced. Secondly, and related to this point, was the suggestion that the trial was politically motivated; not in terms of Eichmann's guilt or innocence as this was beyond doubt, but that Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion had been determined to demonstrate to the world that Jews would no longer be submissive in the face of hostility, no matter how overwhelming it appeared. This message, suggested Arendt, was directed as much to Arab nations as it was to Western governments. And therefore, there was more than a suggestion of a vicarious punishment on any that sought to extinguish the relatively new Jewish State.[445]

It is no coincidence that this trial, preserved for posterity by historic video footage not only of the evidence and Eichmann's demeanour (Arendt coined the term "the banality of evil") but also the graphic and moving testimony of survivors of the extermination camps, was also at a time when Masadan fascination was at its height and occurred soon before the Six-Day war in 1967 when Israel would achieve an historic victory over Arab armies leading to the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. The "Masada complex", to recall the words of Jacob Talmon, was to be a significant narrative for the young Jewish state. Yet this presented Judaism with one of its most ancient and most modern questions, how to find its place

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[445] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem,* p. 12f. Arendt's book would prove to be controversial as she was condemned as "anti-Zionist" with Gershom Scholem observing that she had no love for the Jewish people. For many years her books were not translated into Hebrew. See Idrith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, Cambridge, pp. 147–157.

in the world, with the almost inevitable question of how it relates to its neighbours who were of another religious tradition: how to be faithful to its own particularity as a religion of the covenant and how to live alongside "otherness" when so much of the hard-wired narrative is conditioned by the hostility of the "other"?

This is the most vivid illustration of the re-location of Judaism which in turn impacts profoundly the direction of the Jewish-Christian encounter in the 21st century and the easterly tilt in the Jewish-Christian encounter that this thesis has described: a Judaism that was turning its back on centuries of European antisemitism, to establish a new *Heimat* in the land of its ancient covenantal belonging but facing significant political challenges with respect of the land's indigenous inhabitants. Not only that, but just as the appearance of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem exhumed the horrors of history, so too Israel could not entirely forego the past to the extent that trauma would colour how the present and future would be apprehended.

An Israel fashioned as the new Masada would inevitably find itself constrained by a new-found defensive narrative and it is not surprising that alternative models of Jews living in the land have emerged, one of which has been Levantinism. But is Levantinism part of the unfolding story of the geographical disorientation of post-Shoah Judaism? Jews, whether Ashkenazy or Mizrahi, had been dislocated from their historic centres in Europe and Middle East. Zionism offered emancipation and autonomy yet has a tendency towards a siege mentality that views outsiders as a threat which was why seminal figures such as Talmon spoke critically about a Masada complex.

Yet Judaism has arguably flourish best as the catalyst for cultural enrichment. Jonathan Sacks profound observation that Judaism was never just for the Jews takes on particular relevance here and suggests that Judaism's flourishing is dependent upon its engagement with others. Levantinism may not have entered into the mainstream of political discourse but it nevertheless reflects an anxiety that Judaism can never flourish when it locates itself in a place that is the severed from cultural exchange. Levantinism therefore remains an important intellectual forum to explore how Judaism lives out a theological vocation in a new eastern context.

A critical part of this Eastern context is Christian and Muslim presence in a location that is characterized by Arab society, culture and language. In particular, Judaism finds itself in a context where it is challenged to rethink its engagement with Christianity. At the same time, it holds a memory of life in Europe that still continues for the Jewish diaspora. So, the challenge before Judaism in the 21st-century is to hold in tension historical memory on one hand and future possibilities on the other. The same is true for Christianity especially those that holds to the theological conviction that Jewish-Christian dialogue is essential for how Christianity understands itself in the post-Holocaust world. This means that Christian theological enquiry must take seriously ecclesial presence in the Middle East (where Judaism's ontology is writ large) and Christian self-understanding is determined by the common Arabic culture and language that it shares with Islam, and Christianity's weakened presence in the Middle East whether it be in Israel or elsewhere in the region. And for Christians in the Holy Land, faced by almost

insurmountable challenges as to their future survival, how much is their unique position a potential bridge between Jews and Muslims to be realized?

For Western Christian theology there is a concomitant realization of the global reality of contemporary Christianity that can no longer be framed by the Western academy alone. This is what we have described as an “ecclesial turn” in Christian self-understanding and Eastern Christianity is an important voice in this renewed ecumenical space. And this will require a renewed openness to how Christianity apprehends its place in a context of two dominant religious narratives and what this context suggests moving into a space where theology is undertaken in a different way whereby matters of geography, politics and justice become of critical importance. And this means that the framing of the Jewish-Christian encounter is being re-thought and re-positioned.

The final and critical questions are posed by the work of David Neuhaus who seeks to describe the Holy Land as recalibrated space for Christianity and for its encounter with Judaism. In his writings he holds in tension the central theological questions faced by the church in its relationship to the Jewish people alongside the critical questions of justice for the Palestinian people. This “thinker in motion” is also describing a dialogical encounter that is “in motion”. Is it the case that this relatively new context in Israel and Palestine means that the former questions have been superseded by the pressing questions of justice and peace? Or will the geopolitical events in Israel and Palestine will continue to be marginal in Jewish-Christian dialogue especially at an official level? Or has the dialogical encounter moved into a different theological space?

Diana Pinto in her book *Israel has Moved* poses a final question with regard to the state of Israel—where are you going? and this is also the question posed to the Jewish-Christian encounter in the 21st-century. In light of this encounter in the Holy Land, with the competing narratives of the *Shoah* and the *Nakba*, how do Judaism and Christianity, so intimately connected by Scripture and history, continue the delicate journey of reconciliation? This is essentially the question that David Neuhaus' writings pose to Jews as well as Christians. In one of his many essays, he poses the question can Jews and Christians write history together? This is a bold question and a radical one when Jews and Christians in the Holy Land have very different understandings of history. Even in Europe such a task is difficult as we have already seen.

Then there is the question of how Christian theology speaks into a context of inter-religious territoriality. Islam has always had at its heart a territoriality – *dar-al-Islam* – and with Judaism's renewed sense of itself as located in the land of ancient yearning, might there be a risk that Christianity, with its emphasis on the universal quality of salvation, inadvertently write itself out of the inter-religious encounter in the Holy Land when the other two "Abrahamic siblings" have so much invested in their respective territoriality?

Finally, there is the question of the place of land in Christian theology. In Western Christian thought there has been reticence to think theologically about the physical and the tangible with so much emphasis being upon the salvation of souls and eschatology. But given that Christianity owes so much of its theological language to Judaism how does a theological turn within Judaism in itself regarding the land raise further questions for Christian theology? To put this point differently we might suggest that the Land

becomes redundant, or at least marginal, once Christianity consciously makes the break with Judaism—even adopting extreme antisemitic polemic as part of its theological language? If this is the case, then several questions would follow. Does a Jewish “return to history” in the land precipitate the need to return to a theological appraisal of the Holy Land? To what extent is the language of “a theology of the land” a shorthand for an apologetic for a people, under threat of displacement, to flourish in the land? How is Christian theology’s understanding of the land affected by on the one hand its renewed understanding of its relations to Judaism in a post-Holocaust context, and on the other by the unavoidable realities of the State of Israel (with Jews once more the political rulers of this land and defined in Biblical nomenclature) and its impact upon Palestinian Christianity? It may well be the case that a sophisticated and fully formed theology of the land, that honours the self-determination of the Palestinian people, Jewish self-understanding, whilst resisting both Christian Zionist restorationism and replacement theology is too much to attain.

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