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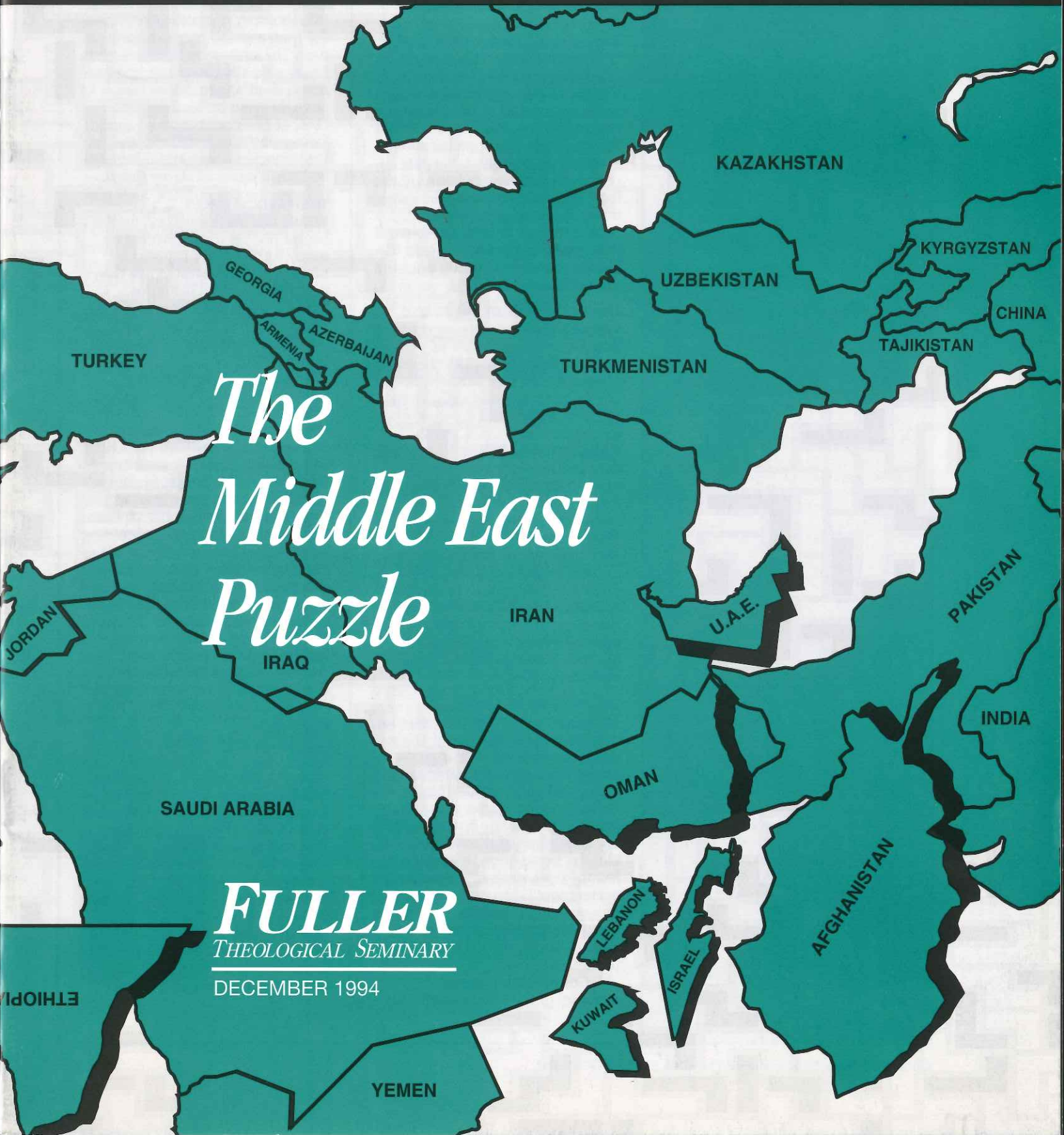
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THEOLOGY, NEWS AND NOTES



The Middle East Puzzle

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Introduction

BY J. DUDLEY WOODBERRY

The Middle East is a puzzle that for years has baffled those who would fit it together. Recently, we have seen three pieces joined hesitatingly—Israel with the Palestine Liberation Organization, and then with Jordan. One problem is that the political contours of the pieces were drawn by Westerners who did not live there. These political contours do not match the perceived contours in the hearts of the local residents, which are based more on ethnic or religious considerations. Another problem is that everyone cannot agree on the picture that should result, once the puzzle is assembled.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PUZZLE

Working on the puzzle is important for us for a number of reasons. First, it raises all the issues of ethnic strife that surfaced in the Los Angeles riots and calls for the same efforts in justice, peace, and reconciliation. Second, the United States has been the major nonresident influence for both injustice and reconciliation in recent years. Politicians are too easily influenced by political expediency so need strong Christian voices to encourage efforts toward justice and reconciliation. Third, the failure of evangelicals to consider alternate eschatological understandings of Scripture and to probe biblical concerns for justice has hampered evangelism among Muslims worldwide.

THE PIECES IN THIS ISSUE

Those who plan to make a puzzle need to turn the pieces right side up, compare them with a picture on the box, and begin to identify which will go where. In this issue Colin Chapman, after years of living in the Middle East, gives his understanding of the biblical picture. David Stern, a Messianic Jew in Israel, gives an alternate perspective. I discuss the religious dimensions behind the three pieces that have just been fitted together—Israel, the PLO, and Jordan.

Gabriel Habib (general secretary of the Middle East

Council of Churches) and Jonathan Kuttab (a prominent Palestinian activist attorney) look at what yet must be put together in the Arab churches. Fuller alumna Kathleen Henry looks at the least-known piece—the Druze. Finally, Susan Baker (who became involved in the Middle East when accompanying her husband, then U.S. secretary of state) identifies the long-missing piece—forgiveness. The articles by Habib, Kuttab, Baker, and Chapman are updated revisions of presentations they gave this year in Washington, D.C., at two conferences of Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, organized largely by Don Wagner of Mercy Corp.

THE POLITICAL PIECES

Where one piece ends and another begins has been complicated by many factors. First, historically, boundaries have shifted like the drifting sands and Bedouins, because what was important was who controlled the oases, not where the boundaries were—until oil was found. Then the boundaries became important. The offshore oil fields were even more complicated, as I discovered, when the New Ventures Division of Standard Oil of Indiana (AMOCO) was asked to research some boundaries. (For example: Are standard measurements taken from the land at high tide or from the islands that appear at low tide?)

Second, most boundaries determined by Westerners were not immune to self-interest, and often not at ethnic boundaries. Thus, Kurdistan lies in five countries—but could get no independent land from the League of Nations after World War I. Then Western ideas of nationalism developed in the new entities.

Third, different pieces were offered to different people at different times. Thus, in the Sharif-McMahon agreement at the beginning of World War I, Great Britain offered the area of Palestine and Syria to the Arabs if they joined the Allies against the Ottoman Turks—who had joined the Germans. A year later, in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Britain agreed to divide the area into protectorates with France. A year after that, in the Balfour Declaration, Britain promised to work

toward a homeland for the Jews in Palestine that would not interfere with the rights of the local inhabitants—who were Arabs.

Fourth, control of the pieces was sometimes determined by outdated statistics. Thus Lebanon, by law, must have a Maronite Christian president (because a 1932 census determined that there were six Christians to every five Muslims), despite the fact that Shi'ite Muslims now form a majority. This has become a source of recent troubles in Lebanon.

Finally, the reasons given to change boundaries are often different on different sides. For example, although there were at least five major issues in the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein tried unsuccessfully to extend his borders on ethnic grounds by inciting the Arabic-speaking Iranians in the south to revolt against the Persian-speaking majority of Iraqis. Khomeini, in turn, tried just as unsuccessfully to extend Iran's borders on religious grounds by getting the Shi'ite Muslim majority of Iraqis to revolt against their secular Sunnite Muslim president.

THE RELIGIOUS PIECES

The major religious pieces are all identified in this issue—Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Druze. What complicates the picture is the interrelationship of religion and politics practiced by all the groups as the tragic events in Lebanon have attested, in which each group had its militia. Since space restrictions have not allowed an article on the major group—the

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Biblical Dimensions of Land, Covenant, and Prophecy

BY COLIN CHAPMAN

A biblical study for a theological journal clearly requires a focus on the theme of the Promised Land in the context of covenant and prophecy. But before we get into a discussion of the text of Scripture, I suggest that we need to recognize some of the important ingredients in the context and acknowledge and reflect on some of the different questions and agendas that we bring to the text.

The fundamental political question at the heart of this debate for many years has been this: What are we, as Christians, to

Does the land—and possession of the land—still have profound theological significance?

think of a situation in which two peoples lay claim to the same piece of land for different reasons? If the basic political question for many years has revolved around the conflict of two nationalisms, it needs to be focused more sharply at this time. The question becomes: Do we believe the Israeli government should resist Palestinian aspirations for statehood—and hold on to the rest of the occupied territories at all costs? Or do we believe that, in the interest of human rights, Palestinian claims to peoplehood and nationhood need to be heard by Israel and the rest of the world, and should be

allowed to find expression in terms of land and statehood?

There cannot be many other questions—in which the way we interpret Scripture impinges so closely on our responses to current political issues—that have so much potential either for peace or for deeper human misery. Is it an exaggeration to suggest that the peace of the Middle East could depend, to a considerable extent, on the kind of pressures that Christians in the United States bring to bear on the governments in the coming months?

The fundamental theological question for Christians at the heart of this debate is this: Does the land—and possession of the land by Jewish people today—still have profound theological significance in the economy of God? Or is this understanding of the land inconsistent with the gospel proclaimed by and summed up in the person of Jesus Christ? Do we have good biblical and theological reasons for giving wholehearted support to the Zionist vision? Or should we exercise caution?

I hope we can acknowledge that the division is not between evangelicals and fundamentalists on the one hand and liberals and radicals on the other. Approaches to prophecy are, of course, highly relevant, since dispensationalists almost certainly find themselves on one side of the fence, and amillennialists on the other. But as one who is critical of Zionism—and of Christian Zionism in particular—I hold a view of the authority of Scripture which is not essentially different from that of many Christian Zionists. We differ over the interpretation of Scripture, not over our view of its inspiration.

After living for years in the Middle East, I come to the text of Scripture, therefore, with a set of questions that are probably different from those of a first-year student studying eschatology in a seminary or a Bible college. My questions have to do with human

rights, with Judaism and Islam, with the survival of Christianity in the Middle East, and with the mission of the church in and around the land.

Within the confines of this paper I will attempt to do three things:

- state some basic hermeneutical principles which have guided my thinking
- draw attention to some newer writing in this area
- respond to some of the criticisms leveled against this approach.

I will do this by elaborating a series of ten propositions, each of which can stand on its own, but that also forms a vital link in the chain of the argument.

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

A people require a land, and there is something special about the relationship between peoplehood and land in the case of the Jews. The promises given to Abraham concerning the land were intimately bound up with the promises concerning the nation, the covenant relationship, and blessing for all peoples of the world (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:1-8).

Any Christian interpretation of the divine right to the land promised in Genesis, therefore, cannot be separated from our interpretation of *other* strands in the covenant promise. As Christians, we have no difficulty in believing that the promises concerning the nation, the relationship between God and his people, and the blessing for all peoples of the earth, find their deepest fulfillment in the coming of Christ (e.g., 1 Peter 2:9-10). But if these three strands of the one covenant find their spiritual fulfillment in Christ in his Church, how can we insist that the promise about the land requires a *literal* interpretation?

God promised that the Aaronic priesthood would continue forever (1 Chron. 23:13). Has he fulfilled that promise *literally*? The Old Testament promises that a descendant of David will sit on his throne forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16). Has that promise been fulfilled *literally*?

My first proposition, therefore, is that the four strands of the

Abrahamic covenant constitute a kind of package and need to be taken together.

THE PROMISES OF RETURN

The prophets are full of predictions of the return to the land, and Ezra and Nehemiah describe several stages of the return after the exile. The recent return of Jews to the land in the past 100 years has been as peaceful as the return of Jews to the land after the Babylonian captivity. But there are significant differences. These

Can we insist that the promise about the land requires a literal interpretation?

modern Jews were not returning to their ancestral homes in the same way as the exiles were (Ezra 2:70). The returning exiles expected to have "aliens," non-Israelites, living alongside them with full rights of inheritance (Ezek. 7:21-23). And events since 1880, taken as a whole, have more in common with Joshua's conquest than with the peaceful return after the exile. This makes it hard for me, as a twentieth-century Christian, to see the recent return as a repetition of the sixth-century B.C. return and, therefore, as a further stage in the fulfillment of the same prophecies.

A further problem I have in identifying the recent return with the sixth-century B.C. return revolves around the question of repentance. Moses speaks of God banishing his people from the land because of disobedience, but restoring them to the land after repentance: "When you and your children return to the Lord your God . . . then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from the nations where

he scattered you. . . . He will bring you to the land" (Deut. 30:1-5).

In books relating to the exile and the return, Daniel and Nehemiah are given as examples of people who express genuine repentance and confess the sins of the people (e.g., Dan. 9:1-19; Neh. 1:4-11). Thus, when God *does* bring the remnant back to the land, he does so in accordance with the conditions described in Deuteronomy. The people confess their sins corporately at a later stage after the return (e.g., Ezra 10:1-4; Neh. 9:1-37). But before the return, a significant number of individuals have expressed repentance on behalf of the people.

If the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 and the Jews exiled from the land, as Jesus taught, as a judgment for their failure to recognize him as Messiah (Luke 19:41-44), the repentance required in the terms of Deuteronomy 30 would, from a Christian perspective, mean recognition of Jesus as Messiah as a condition of return.

Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, could say, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet" (Acts 2:16). But I have great difficulty in putting the sixth-century B.C. return in the same category as the return in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There are far too many significant differences!

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God as the fulfillment of what was promised in the Old Testament (e.g., Mark 1:15). If there is any one single overarching concept in the teaching of Jesus, it is surely the coming of the Kingdom of God. It has taken me years to grasp the simple point that the Kingdom of God which began to come in the person of Jesus was the real and essential fulfillment of *all* the promises in the Old Testament covenants and *all* the prophecies about God's action to bless Israel and the nations. I was excited some years ago to see the significance of Psalm 102:12-17:

But you, O Lord, sit enthroned forever. . . .

You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come.

For her stones are dear to your servants;

her very dust moves them to pity.

The nations will fear the name of the Lord, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory. For the Lord will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory.

It began to seem so obvious to me that when Jesus said, "The time has come," he meant that the time the prophets and the psalmist had spoken of had at last come. The coming of the Kingdom signaled the time for God to arise and have compassion on Zion, "to show favor to her, to rebuild Zion and appear in his glory." Kenneth Bailey has said that his study of the way verses from Isaiah 40 to 66 are used in the New Testament has led him to the conclusion that one of the main reasons for the Pharisaic opposition to Jesus was that he was "de-Zionizing Judaism." He challenged their religious, theological, and political ethnocentrism.

I have often been accused of holding the so-called "replacement theology." But I do not believe that the Church has taken the place of Israel. While New Testament writers give to the Church titles reserved for Israel in the Old Testament, they do *not* describe the Church as "the new Israel." Gentiles are grafted into Israel (Rom. 11:17-24), which is thereby transformed to become the "one new humanity" (Eph. 2:15). Unlike some of my Arab Christian friends, I still believe there is something special about the Jewish people. "They are loved on account of the patriarchs" (Rom. 11:28). But the fulfillment of all that was promised to Abraham and his descendants is found in the Kingdom of God which came in Jesus.

JESUS' TEACHING

Teaching about the land is conspicuous by its absence in the teaching of Jesus. W. D. Davies, in *The Gospel and the Land*, finds four verses in the Gospels with indirect references to the land, but only one explicit reference. This is in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:5) in which Jesus is quoting from Psalm 37:11: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit"—*not* the world or the earth—but "the land." The meek, the humble, the poor in spirit, says Jesus, will inherit the Promised

Land and enter the Kingdom of God.

Davies quotes a rabbi who said, in effect, "If you are saying grace before a meal and forget to thank God *for the land*, it doesn't count as a proper grace."¹ He goes on to argue that since the land was such a fundamental part of Judaism at the time of Christ, his relative silence must have been deliberate. Davies sums up his argument in these words:

In the last resort this study drives us to one point: the person of a Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, who proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord only to die accursed on a cross and so to pollute the land, and by that act and its conse-

Teaching about the land is conspicuous by its absence in the teaching of Jesus.

quences to shatter the geographic dimension of the religion of his fathers. Like everything else, the land also in the New Testament drives us to ponder the mystery of Jesus, the Christ, who by his cross and resurrection broke not only the bonds of death for early Christians but also the bonds of the land.

It is worth pointing out that, like several of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem as a judgment on the Jewish people (Luke 19:41-44). But unlike them he did *not* predict a return to the land (Mark 13:1-36; Matt. 24:1-51; Luke 21:5-36). Instead, he predicted the coming of the Kingdom of God in terms drawn from Daniel's vision of the Son of Man coming to the Ancient of Days to receive his kingly authority (Matt. 24:30-31; Luke 21:25-28; cf. Dan. 7:13-14). It cannot be an accident that Jesus had so little to say specifically about the land.

THE NEW UNDERSTANDING

Luke 24:13-49 and Acts 1:1-8 seem to mark the turning point in the thinking of the disciples concerning the land, the Messiah, and the Kingdom of God. Until this point they must have been thinking in the same terms as other Jews of the first century. They had looked forward to God's decisive intervention in history which would restore political sovereignty to the Jews, enabling them to live in peace and obey the Law in the Promised Land. This is the idea reflected in the words of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. "We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). It must also have been the idea in the minds of the disciples when, during the period between the resurrection and the ascension, they asked, "Lord, is this the time when you are to establish once again the sovereignty of Israel?" (Acts 1:6). It was John Calvin who commented pointedly, "There are as many mistakes in this question as there are words."

The Christian Zionist interpretation of Jesus' reply (Acts 1:7-8) is that he accepted fully the idea that the Jews would one day regain their independence as a sovereign state in the land, but that he was simply correcting their ideas about its *timing*. I suggest that Jesus was not only challenging their ideas about the timing, but trying to correct the very idea itself. When he went on to speak about the coming of the Spirit and about their witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, he was trying to give them a new understanding of the Kingdom of God that was not limited either to the land or to the chosen people.

THE APOSTLES' TEACHING

The apostles seem to have ceased to believe that the establishment of a Jewish state had any significance for the Kingdom of God. Unlike Jewish teachers, they had nothing to say about the significance of a literal possession of the land in the Kingdom of God.

This is not an argument from silence. New Testament writers used vocabulary related to the land but give it new meaning.

Paul speaks of "the word of his grace, which can . . . give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Peter speaks about an inheritance which, unlike the land, "can never perish, spoil or fade" (1 Peter 1:4). Hebrews 4:1-13 is on the theme of the land, and the climax of the letter comes in 12:22: "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem." The argument of Hebrews is well summed up in a recent paper by Chris Wright:

Hebrews' affirmations of what "we have" are surprisingly comprehensive. We have the "land," described as the "rest" into which we have entered through Christ, in a way which even Joshua did not achieve for Israel (3:12-4:11); we have a high priest (4:14, 8:1, 10:21) and an altar (13:10); we have a hope, which in the context refers to the reality of the covenant made with Abraham (6:13-20). We enter into the holy place, so we have the reality of the tabernacle and temple (10:19). We have come to Mt. Zion (12:22) and we are receiving a kingdom, in line with Haggai 2:6 (12:28). Indeed, according to Hebrews (13:14), the only thing which we do not have is an earthly, territorial city!²

There is no suggestion, therefore, that the apostles believed that the Jewish people still had a divine right to the land, or that Jewish possession of the land would be an important part of God's plan for the world.

NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

To see the Jewish state today as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises and prophecies or even as a sign of God's faithfulness seems to me to misunderstand the nature of the Kingdom which came in Jesus. It also ignores Jesus' teaching about the judgment in the eschatological discourses. Although the New Testament writers were not addressing the kind of political questions which we face today, we cannot ignore their theology of the Kingdom as we attempt to answer these questions.

My fundamental quarrel with Christian Zionists is that they do not seem to take seriously the question, What difference did the coming of the Kingdom of God in the person of Jesus make to traditional Jewish hopes and expectations about the land and

the people? They seem to interpret the Scriptures as if the coming of the Kingdom in Jesus simply meant a *postponement* of Jewish hopes for restoration, rather than the *fulfillment* of these hopes in the Messiah and the Messianic community.

PAUL'S TEACHING

Paul looks forward to a more glorious future for the Jewish people (Rom. 9-11). But when he says, "And so all Israel will be saved," he can hardly mean that, at some time in the future, all the Jews alive at that time will be

Paul speaks of the promise that Abraham and his descendants "should inherit"—not the land, but—"the world" (kosmos).

saved, since this would contradict his earlier statement that "not all who are descended from Israel are Israel" (Rom. 9:6). And there is no suggestion that the future salvation of Israel is related in any way to the land. Paul's silence about the land suggests not that he still held on to his traditional Jewish theology of the land, but that he had modified it very considerably.

This is the conclusion of Kenneth Bailey in an unpublished paper on "St. Paul's Understanding of the Territorial Promise of God to Abraham." He points out that in his reference to the promises given to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 17, Paul speaks of the promise that Abraham and his descendants "should inherit"—not the land, but—"the world" (*kosmos*). After showing how these promises were

interpreted in the intertestamental period, Bailey concludes:

For Paul, the "children of Abraham" are those Jews and Gentiles who through faith in Christ have been made righteous. The land becomes "the world" (*kosmos*), which is the inheritance of the righteous.

Is Paul twisting Scripture? Is he deliberately playing with the text, when he substitutes *kosmos* ("world" or "universe") for *land*? Most emphatically *no!* He is giving us a distinctively *Christian* interpretation of promises about the land. Once again Davies sums up so beautifully the thinking of Paul: In the Christological logic of Paul, the land, like the Law, particular and provisional, had become irrelevant.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ZIONISM

If Luke related "the redemption of Jerusalem" and the "consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25,38; 21:28; 24:21) to the life and ministry of Jesus, it is hard to see how Christians today can use the same terminology to interpret the significance of Zionism. Books written by Christian Zionists are full of expressions such as "the restoration of Israel," "the redemption of Jerusalem," "the restoration of the Jews," "the rebirth, regeneration, or renewal of the nation." These expressions are all based on Old Testament prophecy which looks forward to the restoration of the nation after the Exile. It is perfectly understandable that Jews should have kept hopes like these alive as they longed for a new return after their centuries-long Diaspora. But I have great difficulty in understanding how Christian Zionists can use the same terminology in these ways. Some Christian Zionists say that we are limiting God if we say that if an Old Testament promise or prophecy is fulfilled in a spiritual way, it cannot *also* be fulfilled in a literal way. But if Jesus really was and is the New Temple, as he claimed to be, and if we have seen the *shekinah* glory of God resting not on a restored temple but on the *Word made flesh* (John 1:14 and 2:20-22), how can Christians even contemplate the rebuilding of a temple in Jerusalem?

If the Old Testament vision of water welling up from the Temple in Jerusalem and flowing down to

the Dead Sea (found with variations in Ezek. 47:1-12; Joel 3:18-20; and Zech. 14:8-9) is related by Jesus to the giving of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39), I find it very hard to believe that these same passages can *also* be related to Israeli irrigation schemes on the West Bank.

While we recognize that "a people require a land," and that Jews will want to use Old Testament language to express their hopes for the future, the more Jews (and Christians) appeal to Scripture to undergird and justify Zionism, the more they must ask for Zionism to be judged by all of the ethical and eschatological teaching of the Old Testament.

If we use *part* of the Old Testament in this way, are we not putting ourselves under the judgment of the *whole*? If we look to Genesis to claim the promise of the land, what about Exodus and the commandments not to steal, kill, or covet? If we believe in the predictive element of prophecy, what about the prophetic concern for justice? Is not the present Israeli government's policy of Judaizing East Jerusalem a twentieth-century parallel to Ahab stealing Naboth's vineyard? Where are the Elijahs among the Christian Zionists who are prepared to speak a prophetic word to the Ahabs of today? If we believe in the vision of a restored Zion, can we show where the blessing of the nations is in all of this? Is it to be seen in the exporting of Israeli technology to Africa? And what has the suppression of the Intifada done to the soul of Israel and of Judaism?

In short, the more Zionism presses its claims to the land on

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Israeli Messianic Jewish Theology and the Peace Process

BY DAVID H. STERN

God promises the Land of Israel to the Jews. This promise has not been revoked and, like all of God's promises, it will be fulfilled through our blessed Jewish Messiah, Yeshua (Jesus), in whom all of God's promises are yea and amen (2 Cor. 1:20). Some Christians have, in my opinion, gone through fantastic exercises,

egregious of these theological mistakes, for the theology of the land is a relatively minor part of theology as a whole. Conclusions reached in these more important areas of theology determine the possibilities available for such a theology. Mistakes in those areas will produce mistakes in the theology of the land.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The people of God are a chosen people, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, witnesses for God, a people with a mission, a people with a Book and a blessing to the nations. The Bible applies such descriptions to both the Church and the Jewish people. Therefore, any proper theology of God's people must take account of both Jews and Christians. Not only that, it must take account of Messianic Jews as being 100 percent Jewish and 100 percent New Testament believers.

The usual theologies of God's people, both Jewish and Christian, are too simple. Much of non-Messianic Jewish theology, of course, portrays the Jews as God's people and takes no account of the Church at all. The Rambam (Maimonides, 1135-1204) and his followers broke new ground by concluding that Yeshua and Mohammed brought many Gentiles to a true though imperfect faith in the God of Israel. Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) developed this into *two-covenant theology*, which says that Christians are saved and come to the Father (John 14:6) through Yeshua and his New Covenant, but Jews do not need him or it because they are already with the Father through the Mosaic Covenant.

The simplest Christian theology of the people of God,

distorting vast areas of theology, to avoid this obvious truth stated by God century after century in the Hebrew Bible.

More specifically, these distortions have affected the theology of God's people (ecclesiology, "Israelology"), soteriology in its corporate aspects, the theology of the covenants, the theology of the *Torah*, the theology of God's promises, and, of course, the *theology of the land*. Much of this has resulted from a mistaken effort, dating from at least the second century, to divorce the Church from the Jewish people—in contradiction to Ephesians 2:11-12, which states that Gentile Christians have, through their faith in Yeshua, been "brought near" to the commonwealth of Israel.

To see what a correct Christian theology of the land should be, we must try to correct the most

replacement theology, says that the Church has replaced the Jews as God's people, the rationale often being that the Jews rejected Jesus and therefore lost the blessings promised them and receive only the curses. At best they are portrayed as just one of the nations, no longer having any special status with God. According to this theology, the Jews have no longer any promise from God concerning the Land of Israel because they are no longer God's people. Unfortunately, this theology remains the most widespread in the church.

Dispensationalist theology presented the view that the Jews have not become merely another nation, but portrayed them as God's earthly people and the Christians as God's heavenly people. This strict separation of roles did not deal with the problem of Messianic Jews. Do they ascend at the rapture with the Church or remain below, loyal to their Jewish people? Either profoundly unsatisfying answer demonstrates the absurdity and inadequacy of this theological solution to the question of God's people.

A theology of the people of God must account not of one or two groups, but three. In Romans 11:17-26, Sha'ul (Paul), in the analogy of the olive tree, depicts natural broken-off branches (non-Messianic Jews), grafted-in wild branches (Gentile Christians), and formerly broken-off but now regrafted-in branches (Messianic Jews). I use the term *olive tree theology* for any theology of the people of God which acknowledges that the Jews and the Church are each imperfect subpeoples of God and that Messianic Jews belong to both. Without foreclosing on the eschatological possibilities, this theology must surely postulate that when all Israel is saved (Rom. 11:26), the two subpeoples will, at least in some sense, become one.

How did many theologians miss this? The chief reason must be, as I suggested earlier, the tendency to disassociate the Church from its Jewish roots. God has not rejected his people Israel (Rom. 11:1); he will not cast them off, at least not until the sun and moon cease to exist (Jer. 31:35-37).

The immediately preceding verses (Jer. 31:31-34) are the very ones and the only ones that specifically hold out the promise of a "new covenant" with the house of Judah and the house of Israel. The authority of the New Testament itself depends on those verses. How can one then make void the next three verses, which make the people Israel and, therefore, the promise of the land, virtually eternal?

To summarize, the Jews are still God's people (or, more accurately, along with the Church,

The Jews and the Church are each imperfect subpeoples of God and . . . Messianic Jews belong to both.

as one of God's two subpeoples). If this is so, one must stop questioning whether God's promises to the Jews are still valid and ask instead how they apply in the present context. That means asking how God's promise that the Jews will have the Land of Israel as an everlasting possession is going to be, or is already being, fulfilled.

SOTERIOLOGY AND GOD'S PROMISES

The individualistic Protestant Western world tends to stress the individual aspects of salvation. But the Bible also stresses corporate aspects. One way in which this is done is by identifying the individual leading God's people with the people as a whole, as, for example, in First Kings 9:3-9, in which God adjures King Solomon that his obedience or disobedience will determine Israel's future. Clearly the New Testament, written by Jews, continues this cultural pattern of identifying the king with his people in portraying Yeshua as the head of his Body, the Church (Eph. 4:4). Less well understood is

the fact that Yeshua is also similarly identified with the Jewish people. This is expressed indirectly by Mattityahu (Matthew). In Matthew 2:15 he cites Hosea 11:1 ("Out of Egypt I called my son"), which the author considers "fulfilled" by Yeshua's return from Egypt to the Land of Israel. What is the fulfillment? Surely, the verse in its context refers to the exodus of the Jewish people under Moses, and "my son" does not speak of Yeshua, but alludes to Exodus 4:22, in which the people of Israel are collectively called "God's son." By the novelty of referring Hosea 11:1 to Yeshua, Matthew hints at a deep truth, that Yeshua and his people Israel, the Jewish people, are intimately identified one with the other.

Yet while there are such things as deep truths, it will not do to say, as replacement theology does, that specific promises to the Jewish people are somehow mystically "fulfilled in Yeshua." The promise of the Land of Israel is forever, and the plain sense of this is that the Jewish people possess the land (at least in trusteeship, as shown below) and live there. To say that the New Covenant transforms this plain sense into an assertion that those who believe in Yeshua come into *spiritual possession* of a *spiritual territory* is intellectual sleight-of-hand.

It is common for Christians to suppose that the New Testament has little or nothing to say about the land. In fact, the New Testament refers no less than 18 times to the land, although most New Testament translations conceal that fact. The Greek phrase *e ge* is usually translated "the earth," but in the New Testament it often refers to the Land of Israel. Two references are explicit: Matthew 2:20-21 calls the Holy Land *Eretz-Israel* ("the Land of Israel"). Neither the Old nor New Testament ever calls it "Palestine." Four are citations from the *Tanakh*: Matt. 5:5 (Psalm 37:11, in which the context requires the rendering, "The meek shall inherit the land"); Matt. 24:30 and Rev. 1:7 (Zech. 12:10,14, "All the [12 Jewish] tribes of the land shall mourn"); and Eph. 6:3 (Deut. 5:17, the "first commandment with promise . . . that you may live long in the

land"). Five are based on the *Tanakh* without being direct citations: Luke 4:25 and Ya'akov (James) 5:17,18 (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1,45); Messianic Jews (Hebrews) 11:9 (Gen. 12,13,15,20,23); and Rev. 20:9 (Ezek. 38-39). The remaining eight are implied by the context (Matt. 5:13, 10:34, 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 12:51, 21:23, 23:44; and Rev. 11:10). Clearly the physical Land of Israel is not ignored in the New Testament.

Dispensationalists sometimes regard Romans 9-11 as a "parenthesis" in Paul's argument, understood as moving directly from chapter 8 to chapter 12. However chapters 9 to 11 form a crucial part of the thread of Paul's thought in the Letter to the Romans. In chapter 8 he brings his description of the process of individual salvation to its climax with a series of amazing promises culminating in the assertion that nothing can separate us believers from the love of God that comes through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord.

"But," asks the Gentile Christian reader in Rome, "what about the Jews? God made them so many promises, yet they have not, as a people, accepted Yeshua's Messiahship. They have gotten off the track. How can God bless them with the fulfillment of these many promises if they have turned away from the Messiah? And, more to the personal point, how can I, a Gentile Christian in Rome, trust God to fulfill these promises you have told me about if I can't see how God will fulfill these much older promises to the Jews?"

Paul thus is obligated to talk about the Jewish people and God's promises to them. His answer is that while there is and always has been a believing remnant (in the present dispensation, the Messianic Jews), it will be through the ministry of the Gentiles to the Jews that all Israel (Israel's majority or Israel's establishment—not necessarily every single Jew) will be saved. And God will fulfill all his promises to them, for God's gifts and calling are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). Only now, after this reassurance that God remains faithful to his people, the Jews, and will fulfill his promises to them—promises which include permanent possession of the Land of Israel—can the non-Jewish

Roman Christian be confident enough in God's promises to him to be able to pay attention to Paul's instructions in chapters 12 to 15.

Space does not allow analysis of what I believe to be mistakes in other Christian theologies of the covenant and of the *Torah*, but the above discussion shows what kinds of alterations I would make, in order to develop a theological environment that could yield a

Hate . . . cannot be disguised by calling it "faithfulness to God's promises."

correct theology of the Land of Israel.

A MESSIANIC JEWISH THEOLOGY OF THE LAND

Even though this environment does not exist anywhere, one Messianic Jewish scholar here in Israel has forged ahead and developed aspects of such a theology. And his conclusions have obvious relevance to the current peace process. Joseph Shulam is provost of the Messianic *Midrasha* (Seminary), elder of *Kehilat Ro'eh Israel* ("Shepherd of Israel" Congregation), and leader on the Netivyah Organization for Bible Research, under whose auspices he and a colleague are finishing a substantial commentary on Romans. In studying the land in the light of the Bible and Jewish commentators, he makes the following points:

■ Why does the *Torah* (the Pentateuch) start with the story of the creation of the world? *Rashi* (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040-1105) answers: "In case the nations would say to Israel, 'You are bandits because you conquered and destroyed the land of the seven Canaanite nations,' Israel can respond by saying, 'The whole earth is the Lord's; he created it all,

and he gave it to whom he pleased. By his will he gave it to them, and by his will he took it from them.'"

■ The borders of the Promised Land are sometimes not stated (Gen. 12:3ff., 13:15-17); sometimes stated generally (Exod. 23:31, "from the Reed [Red] Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the river;" Deut. 34:1 and Judg. 20:1, "from Dan to Be'er-shva"); and sometimes stated very specifically (the description of the tribal borders in the book of Joshua).

■ The promise is forever (Gen. 24:5,7, no time limit; Gen. 48:4, Lev. 25:4, Josh. 14:9, "an everlasting possession").

■ However, God can not only bring his people into the Land of Promise, their eternal possession, at his will, but he can and does remove them at his will. He does the latter in response to their disobedience (Exod. 28), but he returns them by his grace (Ezek. 36; Jer. 31). Thus eternal possession does not imply continuous habitation; rather, a trusteeship model is more appropriate.

■ Although some Jewish settlers cite the book of Joshua as authority for "conquering" Palestinian-occupied land, this is an illegitimate use of Scripture. Joshua had a clear and direct commandment from God both to conquer and to kill the inhabitants of the seven Canaanite nations. It was a very specific *ad hoc* commandment, and it did not extend to all living in the land, only to certain nations that had had 400 years in which to repent of their evil ways (Gen. 15). It cannot be stated rationally that the Palestinian Arabs today are in the category of the Canaanites in the days of Yehoshua Bin-Nun. Such an ethnic comparison expresses an unbiblical attitude of racism, nationalism, and hate which cannot be disguised by calling it "faithfulness to God's promises." Moreover, the prophetic vision of resettlement of the land after the exile is not based on violent takeover but divine intervention (Isa. 60-61; Ezek. 36-37).

■ The process of settlement was not an act of brute force; God prepared the way (Exod. 23:28, "I will send the hornet before you"; likewise Josh. 24:12). Also, it was gradual. Canaanites remained in the land till the days of Solomon,

living in coexistence (1 Kings 9:11-13).

■ The patriarchs received the promise of the land, but waited patiently for God to fulfill it and died without seeing that fulfillment (Heb. 11). They did not use force to displace the inhabitants. Abraham related civilly to them, paying full price for the Cave of Machpelah (Gen. 23). See also Num. 14:40-45, 21:1, 33:20; Deut. 1:41-44.

■ There is no relationship whatever between the Philistines of biblical times and the Palestinians of today, even though the names are related. The Philistines were descended from Japheth, while the Palestinians are Arabs descended from Shem.

■ Solomon gave Hiram 20 cities in Galilee (1 Kings 9:10-13). He gave away land. If he had believed that the land of God's promise had innate holiness, he would not have paid 12 cities for the cedar wood Hiram supplied for the building of the Temple. And if land can be given in payment for wood, how much more can land be given for peace!

So far as I know, among Messianic Jews, Shulam's work is *sui generis*. But in the modern development of *land theology*, non-Messianic Jews have understandably led the way. One such pioneer was Avraham Kook, whose views are summarized in his book *Torat Eretz Yisrael* ("Doctrine of the Land of Israel"), published in English by Torat Eretz Yisrael Publications (20-Gimel Ben-Zion, Jerusalem). This work inspired thousands of religious Jews to settle in the territories after 1967.

THE PEACE PROCESS AS SEEN BY MESSIANIC JEWS IN ISRAEL

Till now I have been presenting the theological underpinnings of the statement which opened this essay and which I can now take as axiomatic, that God's promise of the Land of Israel to the Jewish people is still in force—not canceled, not mystically fulfilled in Yeshua already or otherwise spiritualized, and not transferred to or taken over by the Church. Next, I want to look at what this promise means in relation to the ongoing peace process between the state of Israel on the one hand, and the Palestinians and the Arab states on the other—as three Israeli

Messianic Jews see it.

Let us look first at basic data concerning the Body of the Messiah in Israel. In my book *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, I estimated in 1988 that there were between 1,000 and 3,000 Jewish believers in Yeshua in the Land of Israel. This was before the big Russian *aliyah* that added half a million Jews to the population of the state, including probably hundreds of Messianic Jews, if not thousands. It also was before Operation Shlomo brought 15,000 Jews from Ethiopia, of whom at least several hundred are believers in Yeshua. I would, therefore,

There are now between 2,000 and 5,000 Messianic Jews in Israel [and] there are some 85,000 Arab Christians.

I guess there are now between 2,000 and 5,000 Messianic Jews in Israel—a tiny minority (less than one Jew in a thousand). There are some 35 to 40 congregations conducting their services in Hebrew. Some meet in private homes, but most have regular meeting-places. Officially, there are some 85,000 Arab Christians, most of whom are affiliated with Eastern Orthodox or Catholic denominations.

Of the Arab Protestants, very few espouse the theology of the land presented above. And where this is not due to ignorance or mistaken teaching, it can only be the result either of finding that theology at odds with political ambitions, or of fearing the consequences of espousing an unpopular view. I am always impressed with the courage of the

occasional Arab Christian brother willing to admit that God has given the land to the Jews as an eternal possession—a view which, for him, is very politically incorrect.

I asked several Messianic Jewish leaders here what was their opinion of the peace process. Reuben Berger, an elder of *Kehilat HaMashiach* (Congregation of the Messiah) in Jerusalem, answered as follows:

The government has gotten itself into an enormous deception because of its unbelief in God and in the Bible, its willingness to sacrifice God-given Jewish identity to join the new world order, and its self-delusion concerning Arafat and Assad, whose goal remains the destruction of the state of Israel. In a meeting Arafat thought was private, he alluded to Mohammed's breaking a treaty with the Koresh tribe, implying he would do the same with the Oslo Accord. Why doesn't our government see this? God will never give Israel peace till the Jewish people know Jesus. About this I am optimistic, for we've seen slow steady growth in recent years, both numerically and spiritually. Since the peace process began, more Israelis are getting saved. But the gospel must go out to the Arabs too, and this work is close to my heart.

He also added these remarks about the Arab Christians:

There's the problem of division among them, and emigration. There's discouragement because of the problem with Islam, since Muslims greatly outnumber Christians in Israel and the territories. Many in the territories expect a decrease in rights for Christians. Jordan, when it was in control, allowed only mainstream churches to exist.

David Tel-Tsur is a high school science teacher and an elder of *Kehilat Hefixiba* in Ma'alei-Adumim, a town east of Jerusalem, in the territories. In response to my questions, he wrote,

This is not a real peace! This is a false peace, the peace of men who deny the God of Israel (Ezek. 13:16). This is a peace implemented by false prophets (Jer. 6:14; 8:11,15; 14:13-15; Ezek. 14:9-11), who refer to the *new Middle East*. This peace stands against what God has said (Exod. 23:32). The words of the prophet Isaiah are very clear about this current process: Isa. 28:14-15. Our Lord said, "I didn't come to bring peace to the earth."

There will be peace only when the Prince of Peace comes after destroying all his enemies and the enemies of Israel. [Before a man can engineer peace, he must first himself] have peace with God. Only then is peace between men possible. God doesn't need sinners to bring his peace to the earth. This he will do only through his son.

This is true also concerning Arafat. Rabin shook this man's hand, a hand covered with Jewish blood. The words of Exod. 17:14, 16 and Deut. 25:19 are clear with regard to the enemies of Israel.

This is a false peace [because the Muslim Arabs base it] on the Koranic principle of making peace with enemies: "If you cannot overcome your enemy once or twice, then make peace with him and after a while destroy him." This "peace" is implemented only for the purpose of destroying Israel and the House of the Messiah, Yeshua. The real Prince of Peace will come soon.

Shalom in the name of Yeshua.

Elhanan Ben-Avraham is a Messianic Jewish artist and writer in Jerusalem who has written an article from which I have excerpted the following:

The idea of achieving "peace for a piece" (of land) is a delusion. Land is not the missing piece for peace. Two powerful currents, the Judeo-Christian ethic and Islam, that diverged for centuries, are meeting head-on. According to the Islamic vision, land once conquered by Islam must always remain in the possession of Muslims, not Jews—and, above all, Jerusalem. Or, as former mayor Teddy Kollek, a Labor Party member, recently put it, "In truth the Arabs have not yet given up on someday ruling Spain again. They will continue for generations, no matter how well we behave toward them, to see in us a people who have conquered their holy soils" (*The Jerusalem Post*, October 21, 1994).

The prophets of the Bible address the issue of Jerusalem. Zechariah describes a day when this city will become a burdensome stone and a cup of poison to the surrounding nations (chap. 12), and all the nations will be gathered by God against it in war (chap. 14). The prophet Joel (chap. 4) describes a specific day when God will have gathered the dispersed of Judah and Jerusalem, and says he will also gather all nations to the Valley of Yehoshafat ("the Lord has judged") to deal with them as

they have dealt with Israel, in that they have divided the land. There is no doubt about the intention of the current Arab political move: to divide the Land of Israel into two states. That would leave Israel a narrow, difficult-to-defend minestate. The area termed the "West Bank," that is, Judea and Samaria, the territory the Palestinians intend for their state, is actually the Promised Land granted throughout the biblical account by God to the Jewish people.

Having lived in Israel now for 15 years, I personally see the good intentions of many individuals on both sides—which underscores the reality of the words, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual

Peace in the land depends on both Jews and Arabs being born again from above.

forces of wickedness in the heavenly place" (Eph 6:12). I am certain that *shalom* will come. And it is clearly our obligation as servants of God diligently to seek it. But *shalom* is from above, from the one whose gift it is to give. This is the vision of all Israel's prophets.

Still, the peace process may bring us a measure of quiet here in the Middle East. If such quiet—perhaps even prosperity—comes, let us nevertheless take to heart Yeshua's warning that his return will resemble the days of Noah (Matt. 24:37), when the earth was filled with "violence" (Gen. 6:11, 13). In those verses the Hebrew word for "violence" is *hamas*. In our day one of Israel's most implacable enemies calls itself *Hamas*. So let us follow Yeshua's advice, to "watch vigilantly" (Matt. 24:42). But let us also be like Noah in his generation, declaring the good news of salvation and of the *shalom*

proclaimed in God's covenant made through Yeshua the Messiah here in Jerusalem.

While these three do not constitute a representative sample of the Messianic Jews in Israel, I think I have the mind of Israel's Messianic Jewish community if I say that few of us put much faith in the peace process. The first and most obvious reason is one we share with Israeli nonbelievers: The level of terrorism remains high and shows no sign of diminishing. But even if it did, we would question the process for two additional reasons arising out of our faith. First, many of us interpret biblical prophecies to be telling us that peace simply is not to be expected; it is not what God will be doing in the time prior to Yeshua's return. Second, as believers we have a high standard for what peace ought to be. It is not merely a ceasefire, or the exchange of ambassadors, or a multinational force patrolling the borders to prevent terrorist infiltration. Rather, it involves both individual peace with God and the setting up of God's kingdom on earth. Neither of these will be accomplished by Rabin, Peres, Arafat, Hussein, Assad, or Hrawi. Only Yeshua will restore the kingdom to Israel (as affirmed by Acts 1:6-7) and bring peace to the world.

Along these lines, holding to the Lord's standards of what peace must entail, a number of Messianic Jews here apply Jeremiah 12:14-17, *mutatis mutandis*, to the situation in the land: "Thus says the Lord concerning all my evil neighbors who touch the heritage which I have given my people Israel to inherit: 'Behold, I will

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Religious Dimensions of the Peace Accords

BY J. DUDLEY WOODBERRY

The handshakes between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in Washington, D.C., on September 13, 1993, and between Rabin and King Hussein of Jordan at a desert border crossing on October 26, 1994, were very emotional times for me. My mind wandered back 40 years when I first stood outside the wall of the Old City of Jerusalem and gazed at the form of a skull in the side of the hill now called Gordon's Calvary, where some believe Jesus was crucified. Barbed wire from the fighting two weeks before lay there like a rusty crown of thorns, and I thought of him who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Since then I have lived with Palestinians who have lost their homes, and visited many Palestinian and Jordanian refugee camps. I have also lived with an Israeli family whose son was in the Israeli defense forces. I have worked on a ship that had previously smuggled Jews into Palestine in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and been wrongly captured as a Jewish spy by the Arab Legion. All cried for justice, a few for reconciliation.

To shake hands, Rabin and Arafat and Hussein had to take a step toward justice and reconciliation. To the extent that they represented their religious communities, and President Bill Clinton represented the so-called Christian West, they brought intertwined perspectives, histories, and unfinished tasks.

THEIR RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES

The perspective of each community is colored by its scriptures, be they the Hebrew Scriptures, the Qur'an (Koran), or the New Testament. When asked, Who are the people of God? they look to their common father Abraham, focus on a different son, and come up with a different answer. The religious Jews see themselves as the people of God through Abraham's son Isaac, based on God's promise

that he would make of them a great nation and bless them (Gen. 12:2). Muslims, on the other hand, believing that Abraham was a Muslim, see themselves as the children of God through Abraham's son Ishmael, who most of them believe was the son Abraham was willing to sacrifice (Qur'an 37:102-108). Christians,

Grace (charis) . . . is what we Christians must add if we are going to help the handshakes to last.

however, see themselves as the people of God, being Abraham's children through Christ (Gal. 3:7,29), heirs of the promises to the Jews (Eph. 3:6) and the new Israel (Rom. 9:6-8; Gal. 6:16) while many Jews have been cut off because of their unbelief (Rom. 11:17-28; Matt. 3:7-9).

The tension between Jew and Muslim is intensified when they are asked, What is the land of God? The religious Jew sees Palestine on the basis of God's promise that he would give the land as an everlasting inheritance (Gen. 17:18). So important did this understanding become that, during the Exile, they hung up their harps and cried, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Psalm 137:4). The Muslim looks at Jerusalem as the holiest site next to Mecca and

Medina because many of the biblical personages that the Qur'an shares are associated with that city, and Mohammed is believed to have made a night journey there—to the very Temple Mount that Jews hold sacred.

Some Christians believe that the presence of restored Judaism in Jerusalem is an integral part of prophecy. Jesus, however, told the woman of Samaria that real estate is not important for worship, and Christians should give pause to consider that the New Testament does not describe a future for Israel in Palestine. Rather, the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon in 539 B.C. is understood as the fulfillment of the prophecies of Jeremiah (2 Chron. 36:22; Ezek. 1:1), and John understands the fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision of a new Jerusalem and a new temple to be "a new heaven and a new earth" at the second coming of Christ (Rev. 21:1-22:6).

When the three religious communities are asked, What is the nature of God's Kingdom? their early historical answers define the problems and suggest solutions. Moses, Joshua, and Mohammed were formative for their communities in seeing an earthly dimension to the kingdom, using force to acquire it, seeing overlapping spheres of religion and politics, and conveying the divine Law which taught an eye for an eye. In recent years, therefore, Jews and Muslims have both felt that they were the people of God, needed the same real estate, could use force to get it, and did not have to forgive.

Arab Christians, in turn, hear the call to work for justice but also hear the words of Jesus, "My kingdom is not of this world," and his words to Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath."

THEIR HISTORIES

Where we start history influences the conclusions we draw from it. For example, during the first year of World War I, Sheikh Husain of Mecca and McMahon of Great Britain agreed that if the Arabs joined the Allies against the Turks, they would get independence after the war. A year later Great Britain and France made the Sykes-Picot Agreement to divide the Arab East into British and French protectorates. A year after that, the British

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Challenges Facing Middle Eastern Churches

BY GABRIEL HABIB

Western Christians are becoming more aware of the existence of Christians in the Middle East and of their need for renewal and unity. At the same time, Middle Eastern churches are becoming sensitive to the potential contribution that Western evangelicals could make to their life. Yet we continue to hear skeptics from the West asking, Why should we dialogue? Is this not a compromise with nominal Christianity? And we hear those skeptics among us in the Middle East saying, Why should we dialogue? Does not this legitimize a missiology and methodology foreign to us—a methodology that does not take seriously the vocation of our local churches? Despite the skepticism, there are those among us who desire to follow the slim thread of hope—a hope that through dialogue we might learn to respect and love each other and mutually seek God's will for a continuing relationship.

I will attempt here to crystallize those issues that may need further exploration. I will address the question of who are the Christians in the Middle East. Then I will clarify the challenges facing those Christians. Third, I will describe how Middle Eastern Christians need to meet those challenges. Fourth, I will discuss the role of Western Christians toward people living in this part of the world.

WHO ARE THE CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

Briefly, there are about 14 million Christian people spread out over what is called the Arab world, plus Israel. These Christians find their roots in Pentecost. The Christian faith, of course, originated in the Middle East. Contemporary Middle Eastern Christians have the following characteristics:

■ A SENSE OF HISTORY: There is a very important sense of historical continuity in their faith. Middle Eastern Christians know that they

were baptized in water and that they have received the gift of the Spirit. But in addition to this, they also know that their community has been baptized in the trials and blood of the martyrs.

Within the monotheism of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, the sense of history is very important, especially with respect to Christian witness. Christians need to demonstrate that all Middle Easterners are related to Abraham, their common father, and to God, the one who called Abraham from

There is a feeling among Christians in the Middle East . . . that they have lost power.

Ur; and that they share a horizontal, historical relationship. Their stories all have the same beginning.

■ A FOCUS ON COMMUNITY: People in the Middle East talk more about communal life than about individual life. They are personalist rather than individualist, and the *person* is *communal*, not seen as an entity distinct from the community. It is very important to take that into account, because it is a factor held in common with monotheistic Islam and Judaism. Sometimes it is called the Semitic tradition.

■ THE HOLY SPIRIT: There is a feeling among Christians in the Middle East, maybe because they are a minority, that they have lost power. Some would say it is a pity to have lost it. Others would say

thank God it is lost, because Christian power is, after all, not the power of Caesar but the power of the Holy Spirit poured out on the politically powerless.

"Powerlessness" in the Middle East today refers specifically to political powerlessness. The Holy Spirit is the power of the powerless. He operates in ways and in times we cannot calculate according to human intelligence. This is critical because this power must be demonstrated to the Jews and the Muslims who consider the power of their religions as political. Christian witness means to demonstrate that Christian power is different from the power of Islam or the power of Judaism.

I am stressing this because some Christians think that they can convert Muslims and Jews with their intelligence. But they are forgetting that conversion is not the result of techniques and methodology. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit.

■ UNITY IN DIVERSITY: Paul spoke about unity in the diversity of gifts. This must be emphasized in the Islamic and Judaic context, because both religions teach the oneness of God and oneness of society and the community of believers. The unity of the church is the historical reflection of the oneness of God. It is testimony. It is witness to the oneness of the triune God.

■ CHRIST AS THE SEED OF PEACE: It is part of the collective historical memory of the Middle East that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem not far from almost anyone in the Middle East and *not by accident*. He entered history at a time when the region was characterized by conflicts, wars, divisions, hatred, destruction. He came in order to give humanity, through the reconciliatory process of the incarnation, the seed for transforming hatred into love, division into reconciliation, and war into peace. Middle Eastern Christians feel they are agents of Christ's peace.

It must be demonstrated that Jesus Christ is the meeting place between God and human beings, particularly in light of the division between God and humanity that exists in contemporary Islam and Judaism. And it must be emphasized that for all people, Jesus Christ, the one who was born in

Bethlehem, is the source of this reconciliation

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FACING CHRISTIANITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST? The first challenge to Middle Eastern Christianity is the withdrawal of secular ideologies. There are no more uniting ideologies, especially after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe. Arabism, nationalism, and socialism do not exist. Instead, there is a shift from ideologies to pragmatism. This pragmatism is based on economic self-interest or on national security. What guarantees security? What will ensure more economic income?

When religions are tempted to fill ideological vacuums with their ideals, they become politicized. Either they abuse politics or they are abused by politics. We see that in the Middle East. We see it in Eastern Europe.

At the same time, particularist ethnic and religious groups are emerging and trying to fill the vacuum with their own ideals. So it is important for the contemporary church in the Middle East to promote dialogue with other religions. It is a challenge for which there is not yet a well defined response. It must be communicated that religion should not become a factor of division, but rather a means of unity between people. God is a God of unity.

How can God, the Father of Abraham, be in the monotheistic context of the Middle East today as a factor of unity for all his followers rather than a factor of division? Middle Eastern Christians feel squeezed by this challenge. On the one hand, there is the pressure of Islam. On the other, is the pressure of Israel. In Israel it is because most of the Christians happen to be Arabs—that is, Gentiles. In Islam it is because they happen not to be Muslims.

Middle Eastern Christians seem to be trying to avoid fanatical attitudes despite those pressures. They seem to be saying: Instead of being isolated, marginalized, fanatical, let us remain like salt in the food. Yet this is what Muslims and some Jews dislike—that Christians conceive of themselves as salt.

The second challenge for Middle Eastern Christians is that they feel squeezed between

Western secular culture and reactions to Western culture coming from some Muslims and Jews. They have also been pressured by the divisive intervention of the West in the lives of Middle Easterners. Aggressive Western colonialism and its equally aggressive cultural thrust, while affecting both Jews (resulting in the Holocaust) and Muslims (resulting in the Crusades), also victimized Middle Eastern Christians.

That is because the West, since the Industrial Revolution and the humanist movement, made the value of the human being inde-

When religions are tempted to fill ideological vacuums with their ideals, they become politicized.

pendent of God. Later, with the Marxist revolution, the human being was given the power to marginalize God, even to "kill" God. So secular nationalism, which is the outcome of Western European culture, led to modern nationalism which normally separated politics from religion. It also established a principle of equality between individuals regardless of their religious or ethnic affiliation. However, both Islam and Judaism traditionally reject those two principles.

In that sense, they both consider Christians in the Middle East as part of the secular, universalist ideology spread through colonialism and missions. They naturally react to that. As a result, Christians feel pressured from both sides. They are victims of both Western intervention and of the negative reaction to that intervention.

The questions are: To what extent should Middle Eastern

Christians define themselves as part of the universal church and therefore be partly identified with the West? And to what extent should they emphasize their distinctiveness as an entity—a distinctiveness that would help their witness locally? The answers are not yet clear, but it is these concerns with which Middle Eastern churches are struggling.

The third challenge to Christianity is the "new world order." For example, people in the Middle East have mixed feelings about the peace process triggered by the agreement between the PLO and Israel. It is hoped that it will lead to real peace and to full implementation of the rights of Palestinians. The Middle East Council of Churches has made a statement emphasizing that it feels there is a political transformation taking place, moving people from a past of fear and mistrust into a future of possible mutual trust and peace.

There is hope. But at the same time, there is skepticism. This skepticism comes from the fact that the peace process was triggered by the weakness of the parties involved and by the divisions between the states and nations of the area. Will such a peace last, or will reaction to it be so strong that it will fade?

Also, Palestinians recognize that the agreement has its limitations, especially concerning their claims for full rights and equality with Israelis. Therefore, although there is an awareness that all should work for peace, at the same time it is said, We have to work for peace with justice, because if the justice component is not there, peace will not last. The big question is, What is justice in this context? That is what everyone is searching for.

The fourth challenge to Christianity comes from developments in Middle Eastern society. Arab nations are rich because of oil. But Arab people are poor because the resources are unjustly distributed, and also because oil income is reinvested in Western arms, instead of being invested in social development.

With respect to economic development, the crucial problem for the Christians is how to help society emerge from poverty while, at the same time, fulfill the

Christian duty to consider the moral and spiritual dimensions of human beings. How can these two responsibilities be united? That is the challenge.

The fifth challenge comes from the democratization process in today's Middle Eastern society. Some national leaders do not permit full democracy because many countries are in a state of war or insecurity. Other states have a one-party system, and those outside the party do not have full freedom.

Still other factors make the issue complex. As mentioned above, Middle Easterners are personalists in the sense that they place confidence in the person. But personalism has its own extreme expressions. That is why there are dictators in the Middle East. Dictatorship is a phenomenon that exists in society because of the exaggeration of trust in the person. There needs to be a greater sense of balance.

Christians are not powerful enough in the Middle East to determine the changes in their societies, yet this is the challenge. First, one must consider the type of society that could be established, a society which is not necessarily the Western secular type, nor theocratic or ethnocratic, but that which respects religious and cultural differences and guarantees equality between citizens. There would be freedom of conscience, even freedom of religious conversion.

But how do societies arrive at freedom of conscience? How can Muslims and Jews be encouraged to accept the desirability of it? The very idea of freedom of conscience is rooted in the biblical conviction that a human being is created in the image of God. God left humanity free to choose him or to be against him—that freedom is part of the image of God.

These, then, are the five challenges Christians face. Many Middle Eastern Christians today ask, What are our options? How can we work for change? How do we respond if change doesn't come?

Some see leaving their homeland as an option. Emigration is a problem. Others struggle to revive the ideologies that have disappeared—ideologies such as

socialism, Marxism, and nationalism. These could guarantee separation of state and religion and lead to the establishment of equality between individuals. But these ideologies no longer viably exist, so Christians are left without secular powers with which to work.

A third option is for Christians to assert themselves and attempt to secure their rights through the

Western Christians need to project a different, more global image of Christianity.

same type of political or military power that Israel or the Muslims have been using. However, Christians in the Middle East have tried this here and there, and it did not work. They have discovered that their power is not that kind of power. So what remains to be done? What remains is to continue to live and witness within the increasingly assertive monotheistic context.

WHAT DOES THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE MIDDLE EAST NEED TO BE AN EFFECTIVE WITNESS?

It needs to experience the process of renewal. The Middle Eastern church itself needs to take on its shoulders the burdens of history and the struggles it has experienced since the Islamic conquest. Then, as a burden-bearing church, it must lead the renewal. The church needs to be born again, and again, and again. It is a permanent struggle to be born again—or renewed—in Jesus Christ, but that is the way to acquire his mind and Spirit. That is the only way that a lasting contribution can be made in this part of the world.

The church must recover its lost unity. It is encouraging to note what is happening between two church families—the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox—split many years ago

at the Council of Chalcedon. Theologians from both sides have met and reached a common agreement that Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine.

Middle Eastern Christians need to go beyond the philosophers and emperors who divided the church in the past and work together to recover unity in Jesus Christ. Only through unity and renewal can there be an effective witness in the Middle East.

WHAT DO CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST WANT FROM WESTERN CHRISTIANITY?

Western Christians need to project a different, more global image of Christianity—to help Middle Eastern Christians eradicate the impression that the power of Christianity resides in Washington, D.C., or in Rome.

Christians in the West must dissociate themselves from colonialism and militarism. After the Gulf War, Western Christians were heard exclaiming, "The coalition presence in the gulf is providing new opportunities to spread Christianity." Muslims who hear this kind of comment from Christians see it as a new version of the Crusades.

The Western church must seriously consider repairing its own divisions. The divided image Western Christianity presents to the world (discord among denominations, conflicting doctrines, the clergy vs. the laity, etc.) is detrimental to the cause of Christ.

Western Christianity must review its missiological assumptions and ideologies and reexamine the Great Commission in light of the following realities:

While Middle Eastern Christians agree that the church should witness in the secular world, this part of the world is not secular. Despite the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and the Marxist revolution, the Middle East has not been secularized by any of the revolutions which have impacted its society. The Middle Easterner remains a political and religious being at the same time. And in recent times, religious fervor has revived. Missiological assumptions and methods need to be reviewed in this light.

The Holy Spirit is already at work in the church in the Middle

East. If the Spirit had not been working, Christians in the Middle East would have disappeared long ago, given the tribulations they have faced in their history. As the Spirit is discerned at work, Western Christians will be able to put their hands in the hands of Middle Easterners and work together in partnership. Then, in Christian solidarity, all can search for peace with justice, can help each other serve all human beings, and begin to heal the traumas of the past.

All Christians must respect the other monotheistic religions of the area, including Islam, because if Islam is not respected as a religion, the world will continue to be victims of Islamic violence. Christians must pray that the Middle East Council of Churches, the Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, and other Christian organizations, can continue to promote the process of unity. Sometimes it seems that an impasse has been reached. Sometimes Christians from the East despair whether Christians from the West and East can ever recover unity in Jesus Christ and a common ministry. All Christians must move beyond despair and frustration and continue the process of unity in Christ.

What must be appealed for, first and foremost, is a bond of love that will overcome all racial, cultural, and confessional barriers between Eastern and Western Christians, one that will transform a past of distrust and indifference into mutual confidence and a common commitment to unity. Then, together, all Christians can witness effectively to the truth, love, hope, and peace of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. ■

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A New Agenda for Middle Eastern Christians

BY JONATHAN KUTTAB

I believe that there is a task for us, a very difficult task, which needs to be faced. We have recently experienced a major paradigm shift. The events of the past months—the collapse of Communism, the Gulf War, and now the handshakes—have created a major new reality in the Middle East, and also in the West, between Israelis and Palestinians. And I am not sure that we have yet grasped the full significance of this, or experienced its consequences. In fact, we are living in a *kairos* moment. It is a moment of crisis and danger, but it is also a moment of opportunity and an opening for the Holy Spirit as well.

The issues facing Palestine—the challenges, the threats, and the struggles with the state of Israel and with Zionism—are, in fact, at the heart of what is happening in the Middle East today. They directly touch Christians and Muslims in the entire Middle East in a way that no other issues do. What happened on the White House lawn marks a major strategic shift in the way that the West and the state of Israel have chosen to see and deal with the Palestinian people.

When a paradigm shift occurs, the old rules disappear, and everybody must learn to live under the new rules. There is always resistance. It is always easier and more comfortable to act out of the old paradigm. Sometimes there is a time lapse before the majority of the people realize there is a new paradigm and begin to act upon it. Certainly for us Palestinians in the occupied territory, nothing has changed on the ground. The occupation continues; Jewish settlements continue to be built; our lives are just as miserable; and many Israelis continue to relate to us in the same way. But that is largely because most people are still acting out of the old paradigm. It will change.

Under the new reality, there is a new relationship at the highest

level between Israelis and Palestinians. There is a new community of interest. But there are many new dangers and many new challenges. Those who have been working for peace and justice in the Middle East have every right to be proud and happy and to celebrate, because they have helped to bring about the new reality. Those who have been saying that there is a desperate need for mutual recognition—that Israel cannot obtain security or legitimacy or acceptance in the Arab and Muslim world except by recognizing Palestinians—have been proven right. Those who have been saying that Israel must come to terms with the fact that the Palestinians are a people and a nation who have their own leadership, and that Israel must talk to the PLO, and that it will be much more secure if it does so than if it continues its policies of military domination, can take some satisfaction in the result. God knows that in our line of work, these victories are very few and hard to come by. We must celebrate this.

There is a new reality, but there is also tremendous confusion. We find that many of the things that we believed in and struggled for are now being embraced by those who previously were our enemies. I myself must ask why private interest groups are suddenly offering to help open doors in congressional offices in order to hear the Palestinian message.

Yes, there is a paradigm shift. The new reality is different, and we, as a faith community, need to put our heads together and think this one through. What does this mean? Where do we, as Palestinians, fit into the puzzle? What are the new challenges? We cannot afford to always continue doing what we did before. Yes, there is some mopping up action that needs to be done. Some of our dear

brothers and sisters in the hinterlands of America have not yet heard the message and still need to be told that there are Arab Christians, and that they are part of God's plan.

The new battle is different, however. We must be prepared to identify the new issues and challenges and to prepare ourselves to deal with them. While the new paradigm has tremendous opportunities, it also has grave dangers. Just because the battle has shifted does not mean it has been won. There are still needs. But they are now a little bit different. We must adjust our thinking from defending Palestinian leadership and its organizations against systematic demonization. We must now be willing, in love, to criticize the PLO, yet to begin to relate to it as a government and as an authority in its own right. The PLO, in turn, also needs to hold the same standards and to understand that it too falls short of the glory of God. We are living in a different world and we, as Christians, must know how to relate to this new world.

Now, increasingly, the Palestinian cause may no longer be the taboo that it once was. And for all the sacrifices that many of us have made and the price that we have paid for daring to defend Jesus Christ by taking up the burden of our Palestinian brothers and sisters when it was taboo, we need to walk with Christ now for other oppressed people. We need to walk where Jesus Christ is walking today. He is waiting for us to proclaim his name with our bravery, our commitment, our experience, and our willingness to go against the current.

There is going to be a new agenda for dealing with Jews and Muslims in this country. There is a need to relate to them with integrity. I would like to step back a little and call attention to some of the roots from which we can draw strength, from which we can get guidelines in a fast-shifting political scene that is confusing, even to the greatest experts. And that is, we must go back to our faith roots—back to the Bible, back to the centrality of Jesus Christ in our lives and his lordship over our politics as well. The call to us is to faithfulness, to our conscience and

our understanding of God as revealed to us through Jesus Christ.

Our task was and still is—under the old paradigm and the new paradigm—to be faithful to Jesus Christ, to seek his will and to attempt to translate that will into political action. Now this means that we no longer agree with the world's definitions of what is possible and what is not, who the bad guys are and who the good guys are, where the national interest is and where it is not. We must have within us the mind that is in Christ. This is our call, and it

*We can . . .
almost touch
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oppression.*

is not an easy one. We must now be for justice, even if it runs afoul of pet causes or popular victims who we have supported in the past.

We must work for peace. And peace here is in the *active* sense, not in the *passive* sense of absence of hostilities. We must now be deeply committed to nonviolence as a philosophy, as an ethic that fills our lives, our homes, and our workplaces. We must seek the Christ in everyone that we meet, rather than demonize others. We must seek understanding and reconciliation. And we must seek to be true to our faith. In the Middle East, Christians have tried to do this over the centuries. Sometimes we have succeeded and sometimes we have failed. Often we have had to pay a very high price, sometimes, even the price of martyrdom.

As Middle Eastern Christians, we also need to know what our mission is within this new paradigm. How do we relate to the new Islamic movements that are sweeping the Middle East? We

have the experience to know that Islam has within it the breadth, the depth, and the variety that we see in our own history. In its history, as in ours, there have been shining periods of toleration, of civilization, of progress. And there have been dark periods. There have been Islamic movements that were spiritual, mystical, and popular. And there have been others that have been fascist, exclusivist, intolerant, and evil. We must seek to understand and to avoid the temptation to think of Islam as a unitary monolith, when we know better from our own history and experience. We must seek to understand why people who have lost their faith in communism, socialism, or nationalism—but who are desperate for spiritual values—all too often turn to Islam for a political expression of those needed values.

I have placed before you a number of questions and puzzles. God does not provide us with easy answers. God offers us the way in which we must walk with humility and courage, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, seeking his will in community with others to face the challenges before us. Despite the problems facing us, despite the new threats and the new challenges, I am full of hope. There is the possibility of a better future for people in Palestine and the rest of the Middle East. We can, in fact, already perceive—almost touch and taste—a new Middle East that is not full of oppression. We see the possibilities of genuine democracy and respect for human rights within Palestine first, and then also in other parts of the Middle East. We can, in fact, move forward, driven on by that vision, that hope of a new reality. And yes, even though it is still Friday, we know *Sunday is coming*. ■

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The Least-Known Piece of the Puzzle—The Druze

BY KATHLEEN HENRY

British envoy Terry Waite was sent by the Archbishop of Canterbury to negotiate on behalf of hostages held in strife-torn Lebanon. He entrusted himself to Druze bodyguards. On January 20, 1987, he dismissed these protectors and walked into what he thought was further hostage negotiations—only to disappear himself for 1,763 days.¹ Waite and the other hostages have all since been released, a first step in peace negotiations between Israel and its neighbors. And while the unprecedented handshake between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin took the peace process to a new plateau, there are yet many problems. These problems involve *promise, property, and particularity*. A look at the least-known piece of the Middle Eastern puzzle, the Druze, may provide fresh insight.

Before the 1975 civil war in Lebanon, the world knew little about the Druze. Their leader, Kamal Jumblat, was an outspoken negotiator for Palestinian rights, a political leader and an admired individual, who genuinely deplored the fighting and its consequences for the Lebanese. His assassination in 1977 drew the attention of people everywhere to this self-contained and somewhat mysterious group.

Accounts from the late 1800s indicate that the Druze held the British in high esteem. The Druze people's belief system encouraged this relationship as they believed in reincarnation, and many British were thought to be reincarnated Druze. Government representatives of England protected the Druze people during the Turkish control of Lebanon, and relations between the British and the Druze have continued to be cordial. Waite found the Druze to be ready protectors in his advances to release the hostages and encourage the resolution of strife in the Middle East over the Palestinian problem. But not only were the Druze protectors for the British

envoy in Lebanon, they have become examples of coexistence with others who do not share the same beliefs or background.

PROMISE AND PROPERTY

In the conflict over land in the Middle Eastern countries of Israel (Palestine), Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon, each country contains regions that are believed to be "promised" to Jews, Muslims, or Christians. To certain religious Jews and Muslim Arabs, this land is promised as an earthly kingdom

A look at . . . the Druze may provide fresh insight.

where they should rule rather than suffer, where religion and politics overlap, and force may be used. In some Christians' understanding, this same real estate will be a battlefield when Jesus returns to establish a new heaven after "the first earth passed away" (Rev. 21:1). For the Jew, Christian, and Muslim, this ground has historical and religious significance. Each venerates and respects the land of its roots. Each has strong sentiments that involve this area. The Druze of Lebanon, Israel, and Syria have a history and a promise, but their religious roots are not tied to the land of origin as are the Jews, Muslims, and Christians. The Druze religion developed around the person of al-Hakim, born in Egypt in A.D. 985, the son of a Fatimid Shia Muslim caliph (ruler of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria), and a Christian mother. His uncles were Melkite patriarchs of Alexandria and Jerusalem.

Al-Hakim began ruling as caliph in 996. Non-Druze labeled

this caliph a heretic or a madman. Then, in 1021, he was either killed or disappeared. The Druze people believe he went into hiding. His followers also went into hiding, to escape persecution at the hands of the Shia Muslims who did not share their belief that al-Hakim was a messiah who would one day return. They left Egypt, settling first in Lebanon, then in Israel and Syria and later, Jordan. For the sake of their preservation as a people, the Druze appeared to take on whatever religion was predominant in the settlement area, keeping their own beliefs a secret. (The beliefs are a secret to this day, although not for the original reason.) The *da'wa* (divine call) ended in 1042, and from that time on, the religion has been open only to those born into the Druze community.

The Druze moved to Western countries where they formed more loosely knit communities. Druze have an affinity for the lands into which they immigrated and are very nationalistic, but they do not revere the place where their messianic leader al-Hakim was born and performed what they believed to be spiritual acts. Like Christians, the Druze were named by others. However, while they refer to themselves as *Druze* when speaking to others, among themselves they are called *Muwahhidun*, (or "Unitarians"). The Druze have a code of duties, which include:

- recognition of al-Hakim as Messiah
- strict adherence to monotheism
- negation of all non-Druze tenets
- rejection of Satan and unbelief
- acceptance of God's acts
- submission to God for good or ill
- truthfulness
- mutual help and solidarity between fellow Druze.²

The above religious precepts are required in principle by all the Druze. But in their stratified society, not all Druze are religious. Many are simply cultural Druze or *Juhhal* (ignorant)—that is, not initiated in the secrets of their religion. To become an *'uqqal* (religious) Druze requires dedica-

tion, study, and a sworn obligation never to reveal the secret tenets of the faith.

PARTICULARITY

It is natural for people to align themselves with an ethnic, religious, social, political, or national group with which they feel an affinity. Such an affiliation fulfills a need for belonging that even Western individualism cannot supersede. This feeling of particularity is often increased by real or perceived persecution.

The Druze in Israel are a small minority. Favor from the Israeli government comes to them in part because they stress their religious rather than their ethnic roots. Their ethnic origin is debated by both historians and the people themselves. It is interesting that the first mention of this people in an outside source was made in A.D. 1163 by a Spanish Jew, Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela. Benjamin traveled widely, visiting each Jewish community, recording their number, and naming prominent rabbis. He met Druze people 20 miles from Sidon. While he lacked kind words for their practices, he did say that they were "friendly towards the Jews," some of whom lived in Sidon.³

This attitude prevails in Israel today. The Druze present neither a religious or secular threat to the Jews. They do not proselytize as do the Christians, nor do they seek dominance or equality, as do Muslims. They simply want to be left alone to run their villages. The Druze's particularity and adaptability sets them apart in Israel but does not isolate them from the nation. Druze villages in Israel are exclusively inhabited by the Druze. They are accepted as a distinct group by the government, allowed to vote, and are drafted into the Israeli army. They handle marriage and divorce in their own courts.⁴

This picture of coexistence, however, is complicated by Druze nationalism. When Israel annexed the Golan Heights, formerly Syrian territory, in 1981 and offered Israeli citizenship to the Druze living there, most rejected this offer. They wanted to remain Syrian citizens as they had family and friends within Syria, some of whom were in the Syrian government and military. As a result, the

area was sealed off and only Jewish settlers could travel freely in and out of the territory. The Druze in Israel are thus sometimes referred to as "quasi-Arabs" due to their mixed experience as citizens of Israel.⁵

In Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, the population is predominantly Arab. The Druze in these countries align themselves with the

Particularity can give way to a form of exclusiveness that justifies limiting human rights.

majority. Though they consider themselves Arab—and have no reason not to—their religion is heterodox to Islam. Concern for their country of residence and a fierce desire for recognition as a distinct group are Druze characteristics.

The history of the Druze in Lebanon reveals dissension with another minority group, the Christian Maronites, who held the reigns of power after the Turkish withdrawal. There are many exclusively Druze villages in that country, but there are also towns where Christians, Muslims, and Druze live side by side.

Unfortunately, when people stress their particularity, they often develop a negative perception of others. Those persons or groups antithetical to the aligned group are considered to be bad, as they threaten the existence of one's group. In today's mass communication world, the lack of knowledge gives way to misunderstanding, and perceptions are influenced by stereotypes depicting the maligned group in negative ways and capitalizing on differences that can cause disgust or fear. Unresolved slights that continue

for long periods become unforgivable and can cause violence and wars.

As David Shipler points out, stereotypical prejudices between Jews and Arabs are indoctrinated. "The Jew, according to the Arab stereotype, is a brutal, violent coward; the Arab, to the prejudiced Jew, is a primitive creature of animal vengeance and cruel desires."⁶

Particularity can give way to a form of exclusiveness that justifies limiting human rights. The drive by Israelis to settle what had been traditional Arab land by evacuating and supplanting the people with Jewish colonies has united Arab people living in Israel. "The conflict in Israel and Palestine challenges the Jewish people to move beyond a particularity that emphasizes uniqueness in order to justify exclusivity," writes Jewish scholar and social critic Marc Ellis, "which in turn seeks to confer a special holiness and thus rights to the land that supersede the claims of others."⁷ And, Ellis further reminds us, "as Christians found out long ago and the Jews are beginning to find out today, theologies that legitimate states tend to legitimate injustice."⁸ Subjugation and inequality foster anger and reckless deeds in an attempt to retaliate for perceived injustice. Thus, terrorism is born of desperation from people who desire to be recognized as particular.

The cycle of violence must stop. The Apostle Paul's admonition that "if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another" (Gal. 5:15) seems to find fulfillment in these acts. Yet Paul prefaces this statement with, "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal. 5:14). It is hoped that attitudes can be changed and that the young of both Jews and Arabs can be taught to respect rather than destroy one another.

Perhaps this examination of the Druze—a particular group that has been accepted in Israel by the Jewish people—can underscore the need to find ways to allow particularity and differing customs, and yet to be able to live as neighbors. These are the first steps in order to love as Jesus commanded. David K. Shipler, Pulitzer Prize prose

writer, writes of hope for reconciliation:

The lines of discrimination are blurred. Hands reach out through the vacuum, and touch. A personal friendship, a partnership in business, a soccer team, a try at the other's language, an attempt at love—these are the wild flowers that always seem to bloom through cracks in the pavement.⁹

With the signing of the peace accord, Palestine is now a place again—in the Gaza Strip and in Jericho. The coexistence of Israel and Palestine gives the Palestinians some property and recognizes their particularity. The bitterness of 27 years of cruelty on both sides has a chance to be forgiven. Meanwhile, we await the *promise* prayerfully. ■

KATHLEEN HENRY, an alumna of Fuller who assists the dean of the School of World Mission in research on the Muslim world, has extensively examined the little-known Druze community through the rare-books collection at the Huntington Library of Pasadena, California.



ENDNOTES

1 Edward Robinson and E. Smith, *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea*, Vol. II (London: John Murray, 1838), courtesy of the Huntington Library, Sir Richard Burton Collection #2056, p. 46.

2 Robert Brenton Betts, *The Druze* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 19.

3 Thomas Wright, *Early Travels in Palestine Comprising the Narratives of Arculf, Willibald, Bernard, Saewul, Sigurd, Benjamin of Tudela, Sir John Maundeville, De La Brocquiere, and Maundrell* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848), courtesy of the Huntington Library, Sir Richard Burton Collection #2987, p. 80.

4 Bett, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

5 David K. Shipler, *Arab and Jew, Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 457.

6 Shipler, *ibid.*, rear cover.

7 Marc H. Ellis, *Beyond Innocence and Redemption, Confronting the Holocaust and Israeli Power* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), p. 150.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

9 Shipler, op. cit., p. 459.

The Missing Piece— Forgiveness

BY SUSAN BAKER

I share my reflections on the Middle East not as a scholar, not as a policy person, but as one who speaks from the heart. Like most Christians, I have had a real love of Israel all of my life. Not only is Jesus a Jew, but anybody studying the Old Testament knows that what Edith Schaeffer says is the absolute truth: "Christianity is Jewish also."

My strong feelings about Israel made me look at the Middle East in a very one-sided way. But in the last ten years, I have become aware of the serious injustices that have been experienced by the Palestinian people—their daily harassment and their difficulty of life—and that has had a huge impact on my life. It absolutely took the wind out of my sails to realize that we had in effect abandoned millions of our brothers and sisters in the Middle East. Once I knew that, I was compelled to try to help others learn what was going on. It is not out of not wanting to know, it is purely out of ignorance that we have had such a lopsided view of the conflict that exists in the Middle East.

When my husband, Jim, went to the Middle East, I traveled with him many times. I have experienced Middle Eastern hospitality, and it beats anything we have in the South. I have been overwhelmed by the warmth, the love, the generosity, the literal giving of the shirt off of their back, or giving the last piece of fruit, or whatever, to those who have been neglecting Arab concerns for so long.

I particularly remember one trip that we took to the Middle East. Within three days, we traveled to Damascus, Petra, Palmira, Masada, and Jerusalem! Damascus, the oldest city in the world, continually occupied for

over 4000 years. Palmira in Syria. Petra in Jordan. (They were both centers of trade on the silk route of the 1200s, and now they are just glorious ruins.) Masada, the last Jewish stronghold, where the Jewish people stood their ground against the Romans and decided that they would choose death rather than be taken in bondage. And Jerusalem, that incredible city—the most revered piece of land in the world—and the most fought over.

My head was swimming and my heart was aching, as the ghosts of the past grabbed me and literally engulfed me in history. I will never forget how incredibly complex this part of the world is. Thousands of years of wars with different tribes and people. The conquering, the subjugating, the assimilating, the peaceful coexisting from time to time, the building up, then the tearing down, and then building on top of the ruins. Old wounds passed down from generation to generation. Resentments turning into vendettas. Periods of peace and cooperation. Then war again.

I remember how much less complicated this Middle East situation looked from our side of the world—we who have no conception of what it is like to live in such an ancient and besieged land. My heart felt grateful, yet a little guilty, that America was so young, so energetic, and not encumbered with a past that was trying to pull down our future. I thought how appropriate that we brash young upstarts should lend our help and our energy to these wonderful people as they struggle to live together—as they struggle to find peace.

Thinking about the Middle East and all of the things that go to make up that region—the rejection, the relinquishment, the injustice that is so prevalent in the land—I realized that, in a

very minor way, each of us has to deal with these same issues in our own personal lives.

For example: In my own personal life, I have had to learn to cope with rejection from a stepchild. This 13-year-old boy was determined to get me out of his father's house. I kept praying to God to change his feelings. But instead, I was shown that I needed to love him more. I would read First Corinthians 13 every day, sometimes several times a day. It reminded me: "Love is patient. Love is kind. It is not easily angered. It keeps no records of wrongs. It always protects. It always trusts. It always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

A miracle happened at our house. This child would be cursing me, and I would put my arms around him and say to him, "I love you and we're going to make it!" And I would really mean it.

It was a very painful experience. But I am so glad to have gone through it, because God gave me a glimpse of his *agape* love of you and me, how he loves us—no matter what, no matter how many times we fail. I wanted this child to change; God wanted *me* to change.

I have had to learn about relinquishment—having to let go of the kind of life that I had prayed for—and instead, having to live a high-stress life in a complicated world, with my husband gone much of the time and our children becoming fragmented.

I have also had to learn about how to let go of control of children. I have had to learn how to trust the Lord with each of the children's lives. I have had to learn how to pray positively for each one of them, picturing them as healthy, whole individuals in the palm of God's hand—even when drugs and alcohol were involved.

Most of all, I have had to learn about forgiveness. Each one of us has to learn about forgiveness. But I believe that if one is in the political arena, one has to *major* in forgiveness. In my own experience, dealing with the press was the hardest part. It

was bad enough when I read negative things about my husband. The worst part, however, was when one of our sons was arrested for possessing a small amount of marijuana. Of course he broke the law, and of course what he did was wrong. But he made every major television news program; he made every big newspaper and every major news magazine. If he had not been the son of a

*Not only is Jesus
a Jew, but . . .
"Christianity is
Jewish also."*

high government official, he would not have made the local weekly.

The unfairness of this absolutely undid me. I was so angry, I could not even pray. Finally, when I became so exhausted from my anger that I stopped long enough to listen to God, the words of Jesus in Mark 11:25 came to my mind: "If you stand praying and you hold anything against anyone, forgive them so your Father in heaven can forgive you your sin." My immediate reaction was, "But Jesus didn't know about the modern press corps when he said that." But our Lord suffered so much more than bad press. The most perfect one of all was defiled; he was beaten; he suffered the most excruciating death on the cross, and yet he said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

In the Lord's Prayer, the prayer many of us frequently pray, we say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." I knew I had a choice. I could stew in my self-righteous anger, or I could do things God's way. It was not easy for me and it took a while, but I finally said, "Yes, Lord, I want to forgive."

So often, when we are badly hurt by others, our emotions are so raw that it is hard to forgive—in fact, it is almost impossible to

feel forgiving. When that happens, we can make an intellectual decision to obey God, and then to ask the Lord to do the forgiving *through* us. He will honor that prayer, and grace will change our feelings over time. I know, because it has happened to me time and time again.

Today the scientific community tells us that repressed anger, resentment, and unforgiveness can make us physically sick, even deathly ill. In God's manual for life, the Scriptures, he has been telling us this all along.

When I share my struggle to forgive such a small incident, I feel embarrassed. How would I deal with a rock-throwing, teenaged son being lost to army fire? (I shudder at the thought.) Let me pass on an answer that one man gave recently on the Larry King show, during a special on the growing violence in our American cities. The program was filmed in Anacostia, located directly across the river from Washington, D.C. Prominent entertainers and government officials (such as Bill Cosby, Mayor Kelly, and Donna Shalala) interacted with neighborhood residents about the growing lawlessness and the fear that grips our communities.

There were hopeful signs among the obvious fears. But the most poignant moment came when a gentleman who runs one of the boys' and girls' clubs in Anacostia spoke of how one of his sons had been shot, and how the young man who had killed his son was now living with him and his family. In disbelief Larry King said, "Do you mean to tell me that you have the killer of your son in your house?" "Yes, I do," he replied. When asked "Why in the world would you do that? Have you gone crazy?" the man answered, "Because I'm a Christian, and I believe in forgiveness." With that, the audience stood up and cheered.

So many Christians in the Middle East have been challenged to live like that for centuries. How we thank God for them, for the example they are to us all. And how we pray for them in their desire to be his people in such difficult circumstances. And how we rejoice that,

because of them, bridges are being built, so more and more people are hearing and understanding and becoming involved in solving the problems of the Middle East.

There is a beautiful old story about Francis of Assisi and his famous prayer, "Lord, Make Me an Instrument of Thy Peace," which my friend Harold Bredesen wrote to me:

When Francis prayed, "Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace," instruments of the Lord's peace were in short supply. Around the City of Peace were two great armies, Christian and Muslim. They were locked in combat. Prospects for peace had never been dimmer. Then God answered the prayer. He led Francis alone, on foot, bearing neither sword nor shield, through what were, to him, enemy lines to a man he'd never seen, whose heart God had prepared—the great Saladin. Saladin not only received Francis, he loved him on sight, warmly embraced him, and gave him safe conduct through the entire city. "What your compatriots have failed to win by force," he said, "you have won by love."

As we contemplate our role as Christians involved in the problems of the Middle East, let

us pray this prayer of Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, harmony; where there is error, truth; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Oh Divine Master, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted, to understand rather than to be understood, to love than to be loved. For it is by giving that we receive, by self-forgetting that we find, by forgiving that we are forgiven, by dying that we are born to eternal life.

Oh Lord, we pray for the courage to live as we pray. Amen. ■

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Introduction

—from page 3

Muslims—we now turn our attention briefly to the Islamic resurgence at the root of many of the problems in the Middle East.

The Muslim resurgence is not restricted to regional, legal, or theological division, or even socioeconomic class, although its major grassroots support is from the lower to middle classes. This is most notable among the fundamentalists—that is, those Muslims who have gone back to the fundamentals of the Qur'an (Koran) and the practice of Islam for their guidance in all matters.

The revival has four roots: The first and most important is a *sense of trauma* from the frustration and humiliation of colonialism and from being overshadowed by the domination of Western technology

and power. Within this trauma is the search for identity. Is one basically a Muslim, an Arab, or an Egyptian? Each identity calls for competing loyalties, which are coupled with political instability, military failure, the conflicting values of traditional and modern societies, urbanization, the population explosion, and a widening gulf between the rich and the poor. In this state of trauma and confusion, many Muslims have looked for a simple solution—a return to Islam.

A second root is *petrodollars* and independence from colonialism. Petrodollars have provided funding for mosques and religious institutions and the ability to support fundamentalist movements in other countries. A third root is *local conditions*. In countries such as Egypt and Algeria, where the government controls the media, the mosque becomes the

logical means for opposition. Finally, there is the root of *historical examples*. In periods of trauma, Muslim communities have always experienced the rise of fundamentalism, and the historic leaders of Islam have become the models for later generations.

The fundamentalist resurgence impacts the Middle East puzzle when the proponents try to make Islamic Law the law of their respective countries. Christians, then, although protected, are not considered equal to Muslims and are hindered from evangelizing Muslims. The impact also occurs when parts of the movement become militant, attacking local Muslim leaders who are seen to oppose Islamization and committing acts of terrorism against representatives of foreign powers that are seen to hinder the movement.

My father in his latter years used to hold some puzzle pieces in his hand as he worked on a puzzle. Those of us working with him did not know what pieces they were, but we knew that they would be the final ones to complete the puzzle. God, likewise, has pieces of the Middle East puzzle in his hand. We may not know what they are, but we can be confident that in his time he will fit them in, and the picture will be complete. ■

Biblical Dimensions of Land, Covenant, and Prophecy

—from page 7

the basis of Scripture, the more it must expect and even invite the world to judge what the Jews have done in the land by the moral and spiritual standards found in those same Scriptures.

I end with an appeal that we come back to the Scriptures with a new set of questions:

■ What do our Scriptures say about human rights and about the status of minorities?

■ How can we develop a critique of Islamic fundamentalism that is both sympathetic and rigorous?

■ Can we give our minds to the question of Jerusalem and try to work out a political formula for a city of peace—a formula which enables two peoples and three

faiths to live side by side with mutual respect and recognition?

■ Is there a prophetic word to the Palestinians that can help them in their task of nation building? Is there a word about styles of leadership, about integrity, and about the kind of pluralism which safeguards the rights of minorities?

■ How, in the midst of all that is happening in the Middle East, can we help Jews to see Jesus of Nazareth as Daniel's *Son of Man* and Isaiah's *Suffering Servant*?

■ How can we help Muslims to see what is distinctive in the way Jesus responded to blindness, perversity, injustice, and violence? Is there any new word from the Lord for a new and changing situation? ■

ENDNOTES

¹ *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1974, p. 68.

² P. 375.

³ *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, ed., P. W. L. Walker. Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1992, pp. 18-19.

Israeli Messianic Jewish Theology and the Peace Process

—from page 11

pluck them; I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, "As the Lord lives," even as they taught my people to swear by the Ba'al, then they shall destroy it, says the Lord." In other words, peace in the land depends on both Jews and Arabs being born again from above through faith in Yeshua, the Messiah of Arabs and Jews alike.

A FINAL WORD

In this I think I can safely claim to be speaking for virtually all Messianic Jews in Israel. Zechariah 12 and 14 proclaim the day when all nations will come against

Jerusalem, and the Lord (that is, the Messiah, Yeshua) will fight and defeat them. The Jewish people will be saved as they recognize and mourn for their Messiah "whom they pierced." He, the Messiah, will be standing on the Mount of Olives "with all his holy ones," repelling and defeating all the nations battling the Jews.

And where will you be, O Christian? Will you be opposing the Jewish people—or standing with Yeshua? ■

Religious Dimensions of the Peace Accords

—from page 12

formulated the Balfour Declaration stating that Great Britain would be in favor of the creation of a national home in Palestine for the Jewish people, but it should not interfere with the rights of the local inhabitants (about 88 percent Arabs). Thus, over a three-year period, each different community was left with a vastly different expectation.

In the intervening years that led to the control of all the land by the Israelis, many acts of terror that needed to be avenged entered the collective memories of the local communities: from the campaign to make a Jewish corridor between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in 1948—which resulted in the massacre of defenseless Palestinian women and children in Deir Yassin—to the subsequent Arab ambush of Jewish medical and other personnel on their way to Mt. Scopus in Jerusalem.

Arafat brought with him the collective Arab memory of a lost homeland. Rabin brought with him the collective Jewish memory of the Holocaust and the Jewish resolution never to let that happen again—even though it was caused by Westerners, not Arabs. Christians should remember that we have often contributed to the suffering by supporting what was politically expedient or what fitted our interpretations of biblical prophecy, rather than asking what was *just*.

THEIR UNFINISHED TASKS

As Rabin and Arafat and Hussein paused from the agonies of

fulfilling their histories to shake hands, each knew he had to return to unfinished tasks—controlling the extremism in their respective camps, linking unconnected geographical areas by communications, highways, and airports to allow the international travel of PLO leaders who had been without contact with the outside world, providing for armed police, and holding elections.

Years of the Lukud leadership establishing Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank made its return to the Palestinians virtually impossible. A means needs to be found to return enough land for a viable Palestinian state within five years. Perhaps the most difficult task will be the nurturing of sufficient goodwill on both sides so that they can live together as neighbors. Those of us who have looked on and applauded will need to provide enough funding so the Palestinians can have a chance of building an economically sound state.

Fifteen years ago, then Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt shook hands—an act that cost the Egyptian his life. Traditionally, in the Middle East, a handshake is sufficient to ensure compliance by both parties. Each step toward justice, however, will make the handshakes firmer and facilitate the two remaining handshakes of Prime Minister Rabin with President Hafez al-Assad of Syria and President Ilyas Hrawi of Lebanon.

President Clinton, in his remarks at the signing of the peace accord in Washington, D.C., used the cognate Hebrew and Arabic words for peace—*shalom* and *salam*. The Apostle Paul added still another word in his Christian greeting: "grace (*charis*) and peace." The common Greek greeting *charis*, through its use for God's loving-kindness (*hesed*) for his faithless people in the Septuagint and for the self-giving love of Christ for the undeserving in the New Testament, is what we Christians must add if we are going to help the handshakes to last. ■

